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JULY 1924

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*Stories and
Novels by*

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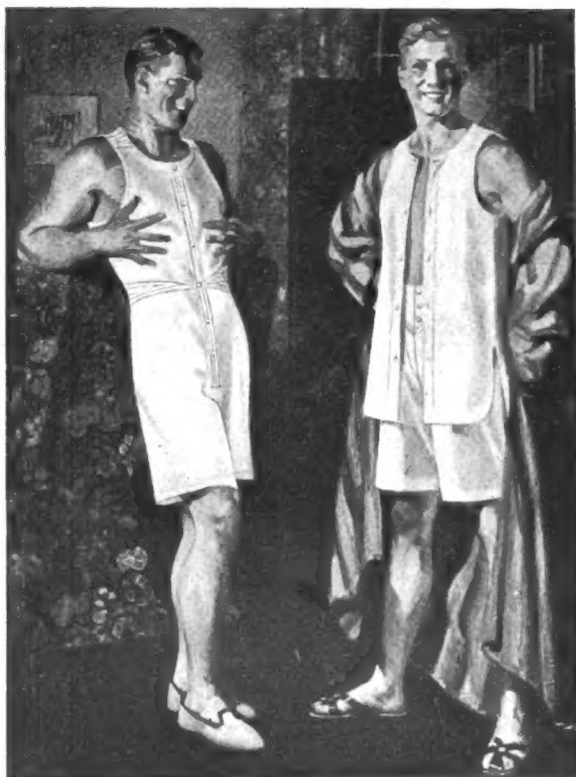
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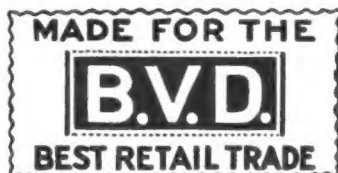
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Everybody's



NUMBER ONE

JULY, 1924

VOLUME FIFTY-ONE

If It's in Everybody's It's a Good Story

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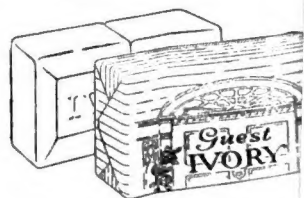
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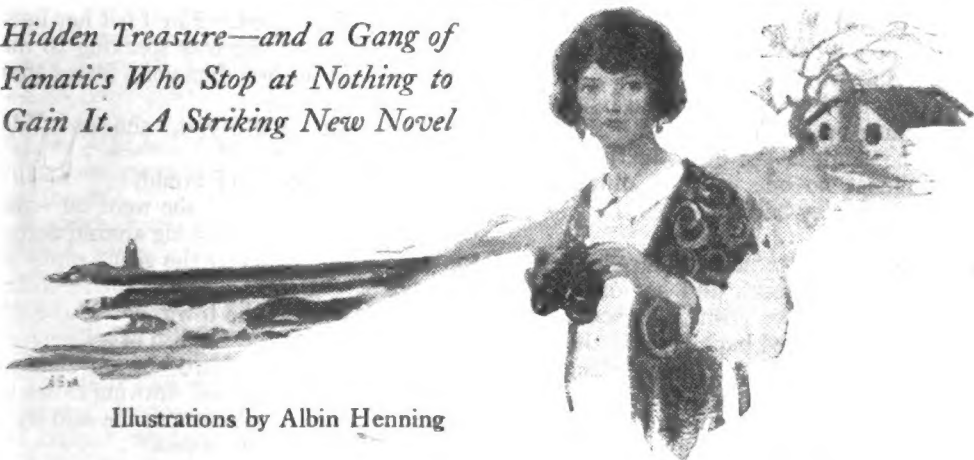
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The Finger of Fire

By George Kibbe Turner

Author of "Those Who Dance"

IT WAS easterly weather. The sounds and smells of the old ocean grew stronger and stronger, as they do when the wind cants eastward toward dusk. The fresh easterly smell—the smell of new kelp—came blowing in. And, though it was quiet enough now, I could hear the rollers grumbling on the beach clear up to Great Point, and the slow groaning of Old Man's Misery, the whistling buoy in the channel beyond it. And as I turned and came up from the shore, with the few flat-fish I had picked up from the pools there, I knew that before many hours now the fog would be following me and we should be having another of those thick blue nights that are apt to come in the early part of June.

I was plodding up the first of the sand hills, head down—for I had been through another restless, useless day; and I was thinking hard thoughts of how the war had taken me and cast me high and dry in this last jumping-off place of the world—the

only place I knew where half a man could pick up a living—when I looked up, and I saw again, on a sand hill to the south of me, that woman in a long dark cape—one of those two foreigners who had rented the old Rich house in Spindle Hollow—still sitting, watching, as she had been on each of the last three evenings when I had come up in the twilight with my next day's dinner—the poor pickings from the pools of the beach.

The strange thing about it—and the thing I noticed most—was that she was sitting, always looking, not toward the sea, as the women do at evening, but the other way, toward the land. And she was looking for something or somebody—there was no doubt at all about that. For she had a pair of field glasses in her hand, and every now and then she would look out with them, sweeping the edge of the scrub pines, where they stood out black against the last light of day, at the western border of the sand hills.

Seeing her, I stopped again, and I made

up my mind I would get a look at her anyhow for once; so I swerved and took a course that would bring me right along her sand hill.

She was sitting on some sort of shawl, upon the sand between the bayberry scrubs and wild roses; beyond her was the top of the old house they had rented down in Spindle Hollow. She was lonely as Adam on his first day in the Garden and I suppose that, coming up as I did behind her, noiseless in the sand, in the dusk, in that place where almost no one came, I must have given her a pretty bad start.

SHE sprang and turned and faced me, her hand on her heart, and her dark eyes big in her white face. But not a sound out of her. And I stared back. For I thought then, as I think now, that I was looking into the face of the loveliest girl in the world.

Tall and slim, she looked more so in that long dark cape; her thin pale face seemed creamy white, her dark heavy hair was plaited in some foreign style of hairdressing, like a kind of black crown; and her great dark eyes stared out at me, widened with fear, as she faced me, clutching her long foreign-looking wrap around her.

"I'm—I'm sorry if I scared you," I said, taking off my old hat with my one good hand and apologizing, when I saw how much I had frightened her.

"Oh, it is nothing!" she said, after a minute—using that slow bookish talk that educated foreigners do. "I should have expected seeing you."

"Well, yes," I said, understanding what she meant. "I have been coming by here evenings for several days now."

"I know. I have seen," she said, in that foreign speech—the little fine differences in sound and arrangement of words you can't quite imitate. "You are the young man who goes down to the shore each night for fish, are you not?"

And I said I was, getting ready to go on. And then I stopped—on an impulse, for I couldn't get out of my mind that look of fear that she had when she first turned and faced me—that haunted look that still lingered in her eyes.

"I'll be going by," I hinted, "for some days—and if I could help you out any way!"

She looked at me, and it seemed to me her white face flushed up a little—as if a

sudden impulse had come to her, too. But she didn't speak yet.

"Nobody gets over here on this back shore this time of year," I went on. "You're pretty well alone here, and if any time at all, I could—"

And then I stopped. For I felt her hand grip my arm; and she was speaking to me, her face more flushed, her voice faster than before.

"Could you—would you," she said, "tell me one thing, please?"

And I said of course I would.

"Could you tell me?" she went on—and she lowered her voice, looking around across the empty sand hills to the silent pines as she spoke. "Have you seen men—strangers—back over in the town, or about anywhere, who speak the English of a foreigner like me? One man or two—or any man at all—like that?" she asked, drawing closer to me and gripping at my arm, as she said it.

"No," I said. "Not a one."

She sighed as I told her that, and a look of great relief came into her eyes. But still she kept her hold upon my arm.

"But did you," she said, looking up into my eyes close beside me. "Did you see any from now on—any man like this, of foreign speech or manner, I would deem it most kindly, if you would come and speak of this to me—at once!"

She stopped and looked about again.

"At once! And especially two men: one large—very large; with very—very bright red cheeks; one not so large, with marks of smallpox on his face."

As she said this, her voice dropped at the end—to silence. She gripped my arm once more, and once more looked back across her shoulder—back toward the low black woods behind her.

It was full dusk now, late twilight. Her voice died away into the dead silence of the bare empty sand hills, and the low grumble of the surf. I looked around and it struck me all at once that it was a pretty lonely place for a woman.

"Look here," I said. "You don't live over here alone?"

"Oh, no! My father—he is with me."

"I've never seen him out here with you."

"He is not well—not strong. It is his heart. But a few times only has he gone out his door upon this terrible sand—which then almost did exhaust him."

I looked back at the black unlighted second story of the old house in Spindle Hollow, and thought he wouldn't be much of a help to her from in there—if there should be anything for her to be afraid of. And I heard her speaking on to me, about what she wanted me to do for her. "If you should see such men as I have described, and you would tell me, I would very gladly reward you for your trouble."

"TROUBLE!" I said. "When I go by here every day, I'd look well taking pay for it!"

It touched me. I was touchy—oversensitive, I guess, after I left that hand of mine in France—especially at being offered money in any way.

"I shall be so thankful to you then," she was saying to me. "For this."

"Oh, that's all right," I said, and feeling awkward, I stooped down and picked a leaf from a bayberry bush beside her and held it to my nose.

I stood there a moment silent, smelling it, and thinking that never again would I get the smell of bayberry without seeing what I saw then—that pale face, those great eyes, that last glimmer of the sand hills in the twilight—as in fact I never shall, not until I die! Then I turned my head and looked over me.

The lighthouses were lit, of course, by this time long ago, up and down the coast—gleaming white against the dim horizon. But now I saw for the first time the shaft of the Great North light go sweeping by above us—as it does those nights when the air is damp and easterly.

Around and around it swung—inland, south, by the pale coast, out to sea; and back and over us again—like something real, and more than real. The greatest thing in the great vacant night! Always moving just the same, swift, unhurried and unceasing, it turns forever for endless miles—like the great blazing eye of God, my old grandmother used to tell me when I was a youngster, searching out the far black ends of the earth and sky and sea.

I looked from it again into the face of the girl beside me.

"But now, thank you," she said. "And I must let you go."

I was hit by that—always ready for trouble since I felt myself a cripple; and I

started right away, seeing that I was being dismissed. But she spoke to me again in that low voice of hers that held me there in spite of myself.

"One thing more," she said, detaining me, with her slim white hand upon my sleeve. "If any one should ask of me—if I should be a foreigner, or to describe what I am in looks, you will not say that you have seen me. If you will not, please."

"Never, if you say not!" I promised her—my spirits rising again the minute that she touched me, that she asked me to help her.

"And thank you now, so very, very much," she said.

So I went on and left her there, on the top of that hill; a slight straight figure against the dull gray sky—with the pale sand hills growing always dimmer, and the sound of the sea beyond, and the shaft of the Great North light, turning up above her, where she stood, I thought, still watching.

And it was only when I looked back for the last time out on the blackening sea and saw its riding lights, that I so much as thought of that schooner that I had been watching the last few hours working in and finally coming to anchor off the back shore. And even then I gave no special meaning to it.

I INQUIRED around at the post office and Ike Parmenter's store that evening but there had been no strangers around all day—except a big gang of telephone line-men, they said. And certainly no foreigners.

So I went home to the old house—where I kept myself alone since I came back from war and found both my old folks gone; and got myself a cup of coffee and a bite to eat, and went to bed—and the only foreigners I saw were in my dreams. For I dreamed of them all night long—of Chinamen with red and yellow faces like Jack-o'-lanterns, and Russian princesses with long white hands, wearing big shiny jet crowns.

I woke up that next morning and looked out, and the weather was still easterly. The fog that had come in the night still lingered. And the east wind brought in the rumble of the surf and the saltiness of the sea over the pines, till the beach lay, you'd say, in the next pasture lot. And I looked out and groaned and saw another restless, useless day ahead of me in this dead hole—that I had counted on getting out of all my

life, and the war had thrown me back into—half a man—for the rest of my days, apparently.

It cleared up then; the fog burned off by the middle of the morning, and I made up my mind to go over to the back shore and take a look about the place and, if I saw the girl with the black hair about anywhere, to report to her about her foreigners—though there wasn't anything to report, except that there weren't any.

But she wasn't there—not in sight, anyway. Nor anybody else that I could see. Nothing but the outside of that old black unpainted house that looked as if it had been empty fifty years.

So I didn't stop. I turned and went down to the shore, over those bare, empty sand hills where you wouldn't see one soul all day long, wondering what it could be that brought those two foreigners—that girl and her father—out here to this end of the world, and what it was that that girl was afraid might be following them. And, still wondering about this, I found myself sitting on the beach looking off and trying to figure out that schooner off there at anchor, and why she lay there.

She wasn't a mackereler; that was certain; nor she wasn't a down-Easter. If she had been, she wouldn't have been lying in there, right off the bars, with an easterly wind—for one thing. It might have been a pleasure craft—some vessel hired for a cruise. But if it was, what pleasure would there be lying there, off that bare back shore, doing nothing but lie in a place where nobody but a fool would have anchored to begin with?

Then after a while I drifted home, no wiser; and left the sand hills as empty as they were when God first made the world, and spent another miserable afternoon about the house.

For I couldn't get that girl out of my mind, and her watching—and that look of fear in her eyes. And I thought I would be more comfortable, and she would perhaps, if I went over and spoke to her and told her that there had been no traces of her foreigners that anybody had seen—either coming over the bridge of the main highway, or around the post office. And then I could ask her again, without forcing it, if there was any way I could help her.

But she wasn't there that night either.

And I didn't see any one else. So, after hesitating awhile, I went on down to the shore again—pretending to be looking around for flat-fish in the pools, though by that night the tide wasn't running right for them.

It was still—so still the mosquitoes followed you right down to the water's edge; and hot and sultry for the first part of June. The sea looked as if it had had a coat of gray varnish; and the little waves just fell over into little running frills of white on the brown beach. You could hear their lapping as they fell, and even the rustling sound of the sand as they ran back again.

The lights were on again. Up the coast, outside, the red and white of the lightship off Studdin' Sails Shoals loomed and shone over the gray varnished water. To the westward of it the fixed light on Great Point gleamed white and still and clear; and to the westward still, over the Great Marshes from me, the little light on Barnacle Point jumped and stopped, and jumped and stopped like a well-regulated firefly. And from southward came the flash of the Great North light starting, from its higher ground, its everlasting turning for the night.

I listened—and I looked out to sea. That schooner was still there—not half a mile out—where those fools had anchored her, off a lee shore. And now in this flat calm she couldn't get away, if she wanted to. They were starting yelling out there, or singing. I could hear their voices through the still air, though I couldn't understand their words.

"SOME crowd from the city," I said to myself. "Out on a drunk!" And I listened again. For I heard a new sound—the noise of oar locks thumping through the stillness, and the sharp shouts of parting; and a small boat came out, black against the gray, and started for the shore.

The fool in her rowed up the shore, heading apparently for the mouth of the Slue, up by Great Point. And I waited and saw him turn and run into it.

"He wants to get out of there—before it breezes up," I said, watching them. And I got up.

It was too still; the mosquitoes were a pest. The surf was softer and sleepier than a drowsy kitten. The only sound I heard—now the oar locks' thump had faded to the

north—was the groaning of that Old Man's Misery, the whistling buoy off Great Point, still troubled by some little swell that was running off there in those everlasting tides. It is the most doleful noise I know of—especially when the seas are running just barely strong enough to move it, and it breaks into that low dragging moan, like something just barely hanging on to life, and that's all.

I turned and went up from the shore—the same way that I had come. It followed me—the groaning of Old Man's Misery—that dragging, strangling moan like something just dying. Over the sand hills came the blinking of the lights, and the first dim ghost of the long finger from the Great North light, forming in the damp air as night came on.

The lights and the slow-groaning buoy seemed almost alive in the silence—the only living things in the whole great empty place. Except for them, it seemed to me as if I was the only creature left on earth alive. And when I said this to myself I stopped!

I was back again, coming up alongside of Spindle Hollow, on the sand ridge where I had met the black-haired girl the night before. She was not there now, nor any other living creature. The black roof and upper story of the old house came up like a shoulder over the faintly yellow sand, but with no light that I could see from there. Then suddenly I stopped. For I thought: "Is that that buoy still—groaning?"

It wasn't, I made up my mind. It was too irregular—too human! And then I wasn't sure. It seemed to stop. I waited, listening. It came again. And down I went over the edge of the sand hill into Spindle Hollow.

I could see the whole house now—gable end showing toward me as I ran; and one part, at least, of the lower story, I could see now, was lighted. It lay in this sand hollow, where there was a natural flow of water, which had given them the well that they said had made them build the house there. There was little enough growing there, at that—besides some beach-plum bushes. But these were larger than they generally grow just in the ordinary sand. In addition they had some lilacs and a few scratchy old-fashioned blush rose-bushes around the front door; and an apple tree twisted like the rheumatism and not much

bigger than the beach-plum bushes. Around the whole of it ran the black wabby ruins of what had been in its time a low picket fence.

IT WAS a black ugly old hag of a house, at best—especially at this time, when the daylight turns off for the night. It was bad enough without this thing that was coming out of it now—the groaning, the muffled groaning of a human being—a man in some great pain.

I stopped at the fence, to be sure—not wanting to be too hasty. It might be sickness, exhaustion from suffering. Then the groans stopped once more and I heard the voice of a man—a thick heavy voice. I could not make out yet just what it was saying. It seemed to be like a foreigner's talk. I didn't get the words.

I wasn't sure—now that the groans were gone again. It might be just a man with a fever, with a doctor with him—though I certainly couldn't place that voice that I heard as any doctor that I knew. I hesitated again.

But then the sound of the thick voice stopped. A light seemed to move beyond the window. And I hesitated no longer. I had to go on—do something now. For that low muffled groaning started in again, and I recognized it. I had heard it once or twice across the lines in France. That was no cry of delirium. It was the wail of a man being tortured. And I worked toward the first of the two lighted windows and looked in.

I can go back at any time and see it all again. The dusky hollow, the black old house, the scrubby trees and bushes growing black, and overhead, cutting across the deepening blue sky of evening, the white shaft from the Great North light growing clearer every moment now in the darkening twilight—and more enormous. And then the low old-fashioned window, with its old dingy cotton mosquito netting—and what I saw there, as I leaned down and looked in underneath the lowered shade!

It was the front room of one of those old-time double houses, as we call them. The old black haircloth furniture was just as it had been when the old people who had owned the place had lived and died there. Near the center, by the regular old-time small table with the marble top, a tall thin

man sat partly facing me, bolt upright, strapped solidly to the back and arms and seat of the largest and strongest of the black chairs. On his head was a strange-looking contrivance—that seemed like a tall black foreign-looking hat; and ahead of him, and to one side, holding an old-fashioned glass kerosene lamp with a red wick in it, was a big man—one of the biggest men I ever saw.

And when I saw him I gave a little start. For I saw right away this must be one of the two foreigners that girl was so anxious to be warned of—the one with the red face. For he had the reddest complexion I ever saw, and the most unusual. The very red-faced men that you will see generally are apt to be soft and fat and unhealthy-looking. This one was the opposite. Fat, yes—but not soft; and healthy—glowing with ruddy health. He was a foreigner of some kind, with small eyes and high cheekbones. His little pig's eyes gleamed, his round red cheeks were as glossy as if they had been painted. His great body shouted health—and appetite and dullness. He was an animal—a huge fine glossy animal. I never saw his like before—or since.

I stood watching through the window—to see him, to understand what it was he was doing with that lamp. I don't know how you are, but anything strange and unnatural that I can't understand sets my skin to moving in the night, as nothing can in the full day—no matter how horrible it may be. And this thing—that moaning wail, the tied man in the chair, that tall black foreign-looking hat on his head, and this great brute with the smooth red face advancing that kerosene lamp, I could see now, closer and closer to the face of the man in the chair, gave me the jumps and creeps.

FOR God's sake," I said to myself, "what is this thing?"

Staring in, studying that man strapped in the chair, I saw still more that I couldn't understand. The tall black hairy cap on the man tied down in the chair was fastened across his lower face by two straps—one passing down beneath his chin, the other at right angles to this, from an extension or low back of the cap. And I saw now why it was he did not cry out any louder. That second strap gagged him.

And now I heard the big man speak-

ing, and understood his thick talk for the first time.

"Vill you tell, or vill you not?" he asked. And as he said this, he held up and shook a small narrow strip of paper before the tied man's face.

As he asked this, I heard another voice answering, and from back of where I could see came out the girl of the night before, rising, it looked like, from the floor beyond the tied man, and pulling back, without effect, at the big man who held the lamp.

"Tell him, father," she cried out. "For God's love, tell him! Make the sign that you will."

But the man in the chair evidently would not make the sign—whatever it was—for which she asked him. His high-cheeked, lean-looking face stared out from beneath the black-haired cap with that gaunt skull-like look that the Northerners—Swedes and Norwegians—are apt to have—set, rigid, obstinate. He was groaning, breathing hard, his eyes were red as fire—and weeping—pouring out tears. And then I let out a curse to myself, for I saw now what his moaning came from.

From the top of that devilish hat—from a kind of iron framework that was on it—came down two steel rods, one to each eye. On the end of these, two flat iron discs pressed on and held up the two eyelids. With these back, unable to move, the man in the chair sat helpless, taking the full glare and heat of the lamp on his unshielded eyes as the man with the glossy red face held it close before them. That was what that moaning I had heard was from, that devilish torture of light and heat upon eyes that cannot be closed.

I could see the man's eyes from where I stood—red as paint, full of tears that daubed his cheeks—and the strap that gagged his mouth. The eyeballs, their muscles apparently getting out of his control, moved back and forth themselves, wabbling to escape the light, but not able to do so.

"Good God," I said to myself. "And not a mark on him anywhere, when it's all over!" And I started to do something. To break away the mosquito netting on the window quietly, and get a chance at that big brute before he heard me.

The girl, as I did this, with a wrench of her slim body forced the great arm with the lamp back. "Do not!" she cried out to

him. "Do not! You will kill him. He has not the strength to much longer live."

As she was saying this, I pulled at the cotton screening. The old rotten stuff gave way in my hands. He didn't hear it, struggling with her—pushing her aside, with the free hand which held the paper, and pushing the lamp back again before the bound man's eyes.

"Do not! Do not!" she called again. "I swear that I will tell you all myself."

"You vill—you liar!" he said. "You know nothing."

"I do. I swear," she called out—frantic. "Look. Wait. I will show you now!" And reaching up, she caught the paper in the big brute's hand, which he had been dangling before the other man's face. He let her have it—to keep from tearing it, evidently.

"Here—like this!" she called out sharply to him. And I started now to take advantage of their argument.

ALL the time, now that the screen was gone, I had been watching for my time to work in underneath the shade, and get into the room behind him, without his seeing me. That is the penalty of being half a man. If you fight without one hand, you've got to use your head more—a good deal more—than you would otherwise. But for that matter, I would have had to, probably—one hand or two. The man was as big as two of me—to say nothing of his having his full equipment of hands. And he was loaded as well. I had seen by this time the handle of a big automatic pistol sticking out of his right-hand lower coat pocket toward me. The best that I could hope to do was to steal up behind him and get a hold upon that thing, at least, before he saw me.

But now finally, when the girl said this and pushed the paper toward him, he turned toward her, with his great broad back to me, and I started slowly working in through the torn screen, lifting up the lowered shade gingerly as I did so.

I straddled the window sill, and raised up carefully with the shade. The close old smell of the old-time parlor came into my nostrils. And then the girl across from me looked up from the paper she was explaining to him, and saw me.

I was staring at her of course, under my

eyebrows—watching like a thieving cat for this very thing. I saw her face—and its expression. It froze first—a look of still greater horror coming over it, I thought. And following that a look of hope when she seemed to recognize me.

I shook my head at her in warning, and she started talking on to him at once—pointing at the paper. And he set down his lamp upon the table to listen to her. But it was too still—in spite of her talking. I could hear the moaning of Old Man's Misery, the buoy in the distant channel, from the night outside; the breathing of the tied man inside the room. For he had stopped moaning, now the torture had been taken from his eyes, and sat staring—and breathing strangely—thick and hard and loud. And then, by my awkwardness—just as I had almost crawled into the room safely—I made the noise I had feared. The old shade flapped back from my unsteady hand. I grabbed to prevent it. And the big brute with his back toward me turned faster than you could imagine a man of that size could do—his hand going to his side pocket where his gun was.

Then suddenly the room was in darkness. The girl beside him had blown out the light upon the marble-topped table.

I was down on the floor by now—flat, in the dark—my best chance when he shot. But he didn't shoot.

I heard him jump.

"Here he comes," I said to myself. "He is going to rush me." And I gathered myself up to grab his legs.

But instead of that, with a grunt like a bull you wake up in a barn at night, he turned and jumped—away from me! Out through the back door, into the back room, out to an open window in the back. I saw his big black bulk against the light sand outdoors.

Bang! Crash! He hit the frame above him, going through; and the glass came jangling down upon the wooden floor. He was running—scared wild! From me!

I ran after him, when I saw it—stared out the window. He was gone—out into the dark, in that soft sand. There was nothing to be heard; nothing to be seen but the black side of the old back shed, standing out from the main house, and the lighter slope of the sand hill beyond. Overhead, in the thick black sky, the white bar of the

Great North light swept on over the Hollow, and was gone—leaving the stillness stiller and more dark.

"Am I crazy?" I asked myself, staring everywhere—at the sand slope, the black shadowed corner, between the main house and the shed—staring and seeing nothing.

And then the girl's voice called to me. "Do not!" it cried. "Do not go out. They will kill you!"

"They!" I said to myself. "What now? There was only one man here that I saw."

And then I stopped short. For I heard her loud whisper—the sound of that terrible whisper through the dark: "Come! Come quickly. They have killed him!"

"They?" I said to myself, hurrying. "Killed him!"

I STRUCK a match and lit the light.

The man was gone—done for. I could see that before we untied him; got that black ugly thing, that cap, unstrapped from his head and eyes. Black Astrakhan it was, I saw now, that fur old-fashioned people used to wear sometimes in caps—only this was high and foreign-shaped and stiff.

The man was dead, bound in the chair. His red eyes still stared out when we released them from the little irons that held their eyelids up; and the tears lay, still wet, upon his cheeks. I hurried, working with the girl, untying him—talking to myself and scared, for it was a shocking thing to see. And all our haste was to be useless; I knew that from the beginning.

But we untied him at last from the horsehair chair—his legs from its legs, and his arms from its high old arms; and we got him over upon the old wide horsehair sofa, with the rolling ends. There was no use, but of course she could not really understand at first.

He lay there, a long, lean man, with a face like a skull—all the face bones showing through, as they do with those Swedes or Norwegians, one or the other of which I felt pretty sure now he was. A long, lean, bony man with yellowed finger tips, and a queer tart smell, the smell of chemicals on him. Dead, and not a mark on him—only those eyes, those tortured eyes, still unclosed, where they had been held back by that devilish cap.

The girl was down upon her knees, her

white face still whiter against the loose black foreign gown she wore—working over him, calling to him, in some strange foreign language. I helped her what I could, but it was no use. And finally I had to stop to tell her so.

"I am afraid," I said—and put my hand upon her shoulder.

"Yes. I know. I see," she said, in a dazed voice. "They have killed him."

And started right on, nevertheless, working, calling to him in that foreign tongue, as if she hadn't said it. I had to get up, and turn away.

I looked around the place, keeping out of her way—trying to locate myself. There I stood, in that old-time parlor of those old people, with its old haircloth best set of furniture, and its white marble-topped table and its whatnot and sea shells and even the old best carpet, with roses as big as your head. For forty years the stillest, quietest place on earth—never opened more than once or twice a year for some gathering of rough, homely folks. And here I stood looking at that strange white-faced beautiful girl in a straight black foreign dress—like no clothes I'd ever seen—calling out in an unknown tongue her love and grief and horror over this foreigner who lay there, killed before my eyes with this outlandish machine of torture that would have disgraced the devil, for some reason I had no hint of—except that it had something to do with a piece of paper.

"What—what is this thing?" I kept muttering to myself. And who, I kept thinking, were "they," that she had called out about?

I walked over—without exactly thinking what I did—to the center of the room, and stooped down and picked up from the old rose-colored carpet that damned contrivance, that high crazy foreign cap or hat that great apple-cheeked brute had been torturing him with, and turned it over in my hands—standing back, keeping out of her way.

I stopped and looked over the devilish ingenuity of the thing, its general stiffness, the part that went down over the back of the head and neck, the straps that held it on, and the little clamps that came down and held up the eyelids. It was collapsible, too, I saw—so you could fold it up and put it away.

"**T**HAT thing wasn't made in a day, that's certain," I said to myself.

It was a regular machine of torture, finished and planned. And I wondered then if it wasn't an old thing—some outlandish invention that had been worked up for the purpose of torturing men in some outlandish cruel corner of the earth.

And then, looking down again—still waiting, not wanting to disturb her—I saw something else upon the floor, and I knew what it must be—the thing that all this was about, that strip of paper which the red-faced man had been dangling before the eyes of the man he had been torturing, and the girl had snatched from him to explain. She evidently had dropped it in the excitement, when I had been caught coming in the window and she had saved my life by blowing out the light.

I took it up and gave one look at it; and then didn't stop to look longer. For seeing it brought the real situation up before me—that there was somebody, one or more than one, outside there, waiting to grab this thing; that while we two stayed there in the full shine of the lamplight, I waiting for her grief to spend itself, outside there in the dark there might be God knew what deviltry brewing with whoever it was that was after this thing—this paper.

So, sticking it hurriedly into a pocket, I went over and put my hand on the girl's shoulder where she sat dazed with grief upon the floor, beside the sofa where the dead man lay.

"Don't you think," I said, as gently as I could, "we'd better go now, and get help?"

She didn't answer at first. She seemed stunned—as if she didn't hear me.

I asked her again if she didn't think we had better go, and this time she heard—sprang up.

"Go?" she asked, and stared a dull stare. "Go. At once."

And now speech and understanding of her surroundings seemed to come back to her together. "Go. Go!" she cried. "By all means. Yes. You must go at once."

"Come on," I said.

But she stood back—away from me—her eyes widening.

"You—not I!" she said. "I must stay. I cannot go."

"Why not?"

"They would not let me!"

I stood watching her.

"They will not let me," she repeated. "But you—you must try to go. It must not be that you become caught—destroyed—in this our affair. It is not necessary that you should be killed also."

I stood, still staring at her, in the silence. "Go!" I said then. "And leave you here!"

"You must," she said. "I cannot go. They will not now allow escape to me."

"Do you mean," I asked her, "that they—whoever they are—are outside there now, waiting?"

She nodded her head deeply, her eyes in mine; and we stood silent, listening, as if by common agreement. There was nothing—no sign of any living, moving thing anywhere, as far as I could see. It was so still you heard the low groaning of that buoy—Old Man's Misery way up in the rips beyond Great Point.

"And do you think I'd leave you here—now—alone?" I asked, taking her hand.

"But you must—you must!" she said, enclosing my hand with hers, both cold as ice. "You must not be killed for me, a foreign stranger, whom at any rate you cannot save. So go. Go. Please go, while it may be you will still have time."

I stood still again, listening, waiting, trying to get my bearings. "What is this thing all about?" I asked her. "Is it this?" I asked, and let go her hand and took the strip of paper out from the pocket where I had slipped it.

"Yes."

I straightened it out and looked it over. "What is it?" I said, when I did so. "Or maybe you don't want to tell me!" I said, lowering it, stopping reading, when I thought what I was doing.

"It is what they come to seek!"

"This is!" I said, wondering. "This is what they're after?"

"It is not the thing itself," she went on explaining, "that they wish, no. This is just directions for the hiding-place of that which they would find."

"**T**HE hiding-place?" I said after her, still holding it in my hand.

"Yes," she told me. "That means nothing to any one but me. Read it, if you will—see for yourself."

I held it up and read it, when she told me to—those eight or ten words written in

a queer small sloping band across this strip of paper:

Studdin' Sails. Great Point. Barnacle. North. Gneiss. 2.2.

I stood staring at the thing.

"You see," she said. "It will mean nothing to you, or any one—but me."

"It's the name of lighthouses," I said, "—the different lights along the shore. I see that much. All but that last word—that gneiss, or however you pronounce it, and those two figure 2's. But come on," I said to her. "We must be going."

And I tried to force her to go.

"No. No," she said again. "You, but not I. They would not let me go. They must still hold me—to explain this for them."

"Tell me this," I said, stopping trying to move her. "What is this thing? Who are these men—these murderers who are out here after you?"

She hesitated.

"Go on," I said, excited, insisting. "Tell me. You must."

"It is—the Zetka," she said finally, hesitating.

"The Zet—" I said, when she interrupted me.

"Wait," she said. "Listen."

I listened—heard nothing but the tune of a mosquito in my ear; the old hollow lonesome droning of that Old Man's Misery. But her ears must have been better than mine.

"Wait," she said, speaking very loud now—surprisingly so. "I will show you something." And stepping to the marble-topped table, she suddenly blew out the light once more.

And as she did it, I stepped close to her—realizing something was going wrong.

"They are there!" she whispered. "Come again. Outside."

We stepped softly to one side—waiting together, in the dark. But we moved for only a very little distance. For now, with a sudden grunt and no more attempt at concealment, we heard some one—that great red-faced brute probably, who had so suddenly and unexpectedly run away—come climbing in now at the window, through which I had first come.

"You are not armed?" the girl asked in my ear. "No?"

"No."

"Come," she said. "Come. They not kill you also. 'Come, before the come with him.'"

"Where?" I whispered.

"Here. I will show you," she whispered back; and taking my hand, she led me through the dark out into the old-fashioned hall, and up the steep narrow steps of the old-time house into the second story.

"Here we can at least resist them—time," she told me.

Underneath we could hear that great red-faced murderer stumbling around the first story, cursing, charging shadows, falling over furniture.

WE STOOD there at the head of the old steep stairs—my arm about her hands clasped upon mine—scarce breathing, listening in the dark. Underneath, on the first floor, that great brute that apple-cheeked murderer, went tramping around, still overturning the furniture to find us in the darkness.

"It is he!" said the girl beside me, in my ear. "Mannik."

"The red-faced one?" I whispered.

"Yes. Mannik—who has killed so many already for the Zetka."

"The Zetka?"

"Hush! He comes below again," she whispered. And we were still.

It was hot up there, where the head of the stairs ended in that old-fashioned attic room. You could smell the hot dry resinous smell of the beams and shingles, and the stronger smell of the old dry herbs and tar from the different old fishing gear that old-fashioned people had left there cluttering up that old-time unfinished chamber, as they used to call it. Gradually we could see some of this from the light from the two end windows, the lighter blue-black patches at the farther side of the black place.

We stood there, not daring to move yet for fear of his hearing us on the bare floor and getting a clue to where we were hiding. We heard him once more going on, through one room after another, commanding us, in his thick guttural voice, to come out: "Coom out! Coom out—or I vill shoot." Then stopping for a minute, listening, charging into another room!

The girl beside me came closer. I could feel her breath warm against my ear as she

whispered: "Could we not soon find something—some weapon?"

"We must," I said, and stood still again. He was coming back again through the sitting-room and dining-room underneath us.

"He will come here now!" she whispered, and clutched my coat as we both stood waiting, rigid.

But he didn't. He stood still in the door between the hallway and the east room—the dining-room—and started on new tactics, wheedling and threatening.

"Coom now!" he called. "Coom now! Gife up the paper and you vill live. I vill let you go. But if not—right now—right away—then you vill die!" he said, and stopped and listened.

We stood and listened, too—huddled together, like children in a dangerous fairy-tale, but all the time my wits were going around and around, casting about for some chance of a weapon, somewhere.

"You die—othervise! I promise you that!" he said after a long minute's waiting, down there right underneath us. "I promise you that," he said once more. "Remember that now!" And once more he listened—for a long while.

We stood still as two statues—we had to, in that stillness. We could hear the great brute's heavy breathing, a floor board that creaked under him. And every so often the faint far-off wailing of that old buoy, the only sound of anything that even seemed alive around us, on that empty, God-for-saken back shore.

"If we ever get out of here," I said to myself, "it will be all our own work." And I stood still and wished that I was what I used to be—not half a man. And my wits went working, casting around, using the chief weapon half a man has to count on—thinking up some idea of how to fight him off or escape from that hot old stuffy attic chamber, where he had us cornered.

"Goot!" he said up the black stair well. "Now I look vunce more for sure. And then I coom and get you."

HE WENT back again into the west room—the front parlor where the dead man lay. We heard a tinkle and a scratch.

"He lights the lamp!" said the girl's voice again in my ear.

We drew back, as we saw the yellow light

below light up the narrow hallway—pass on into the dining-room. He was looking around the house again, making sure before he finally came up to get us.

"Wait," I whispered to the girl. "Stay here. Watch."

"Where will you go?"

"To get something to fight with—when he comes!" I said, and stole away, fishing around in the black hole under the rafters. My eyes were more used to the dark now. I could see a little something—by the light from the crisscross patches of dull blue sky where the windows were. I caught the sight of things hanging from the eaves—blacker still than the room. I felt of them—softly, hurriedly. Some clothes—a suit of oilskins—a net! All soft—nothing to my purpose!

I bent down and worked in under the rafters. Nothing! A few hand lines on reels, some old carpet, a piece of bamboo fishing pole, and then something, at last! A club, I thought. And taking it in my hand, I cursed inside. It was nothing but an old rolled-up window shade.

"Is he coming yet?" I whispered back to her.

"No."

And I got down, and fumbled on the floor. Nothing—nothing! A pile of dusty farmer's almanacs, an old-fashioned straw hat, a pair of rubber boots. Nothing, not one thing you could close your fingers on and feel something hard inside them.

I went to the left-hand window—thinking maybe we might jump down, some way, out of our trap. I looked out, on the dull yellow sand, the darker opening out of the Hollow to the beach, and overhead at the dim sky. And as I looked the beam of the Great North light swept by overhead, and went again.

Just once I saw it, and no more. For I saw we could not get out there—it was too high for a woman, even if we could open that old window, and get away before he got us. And now, anyway, it was too late, for I heard the girl whispering behind me by the top of the stairway.

"He comes now!" she said. And I saw again the faint glow from the stair well start strengthening on the rafters, as she stepped back and away from the wooden rail that guarded the old staircase where it came up with its other side against a wall.

The glow grew brighter, the shadows stopped. He stood again at the foot of the stair well and spoke.

"Goot! Now I know. Now I coom!" he called, and stood once more and listened—while I kept hurrying, fumbling, trying to find something—something!

"Throw down the paper," he cried again. "And it vill safe you. I vill go—and let you life."

I said nothing—but kept on searching—searching softly, for something—anything! And, fumbling, I struck a box of beads on a little old table, and down they went, scattering on the floor.

"**O**HO! Now I coom. I hear you. Now I coom!" he called out. And I heard his heavy foot upon the stairs—starting up to grab us—like the old ogre in "Jack-and-the-Beanstalk."

I straightened up to start back to the stairway. If I only had something—that half a man could fight with. I thought of the rolled-up window shade—the only possible thing I'd touched. And as I did, my head hit something soft and I started—grabbing it.

It was that old piece of seine hanging on the rafters, quite a stretch of it, and all at once I saw what I might do with it, possibly. It was something anyhow. I grabbed it.

I had little time enough. He was coming up. The yellow light grew stronger. The shadows started moving on the roof. I could see the girl's slim figure black against the radiance.

The old seine caught on the nails. I jerked it—pulled it off—dragged it to the edge of the stair well.

The wall made one side of this, the ending of the stairs another. The other two were guarded by a wooden railing, waist-high. I went and stood by the farther side—the rail opposite the ending of the stairs.

The net made a swish on the bare floor as I dragged it after me. He must have heard it and wondered, for he stopped again, puzzled, listening. And then he went downstairs again.

"What now?" I asked myself.

Then I saw. The light went out below. He felt safer and more free-handed without it.

But if it was better for him, it was better for me, too.

"You stand clear," I whispered to the girl. "Let me come—over where you are." And she stole back around me, so I was at the end opposite, and I, on the next to the top of the stairway.

"Let me take this end," she whispered. For she thought, I suppose, I might be having some trouble handling it with just my good hand.

"Just that one end," I whispered to her. "If you lift it up on your side of the rail."

She did—as cool and handy as spreading a tablecloth for tea. And seeing this, so handy she was, I whispered to her—directing her how to help me.

"Hold it there!" I whispered. "Against the rail. When I say, 'Let go,' drop it. Will you?"

"Yes."

In a second or two, with her help, I had it all fixed.

"He comes," she whispered.

"Be ready," I whispered back.

He started now, making a rush for us like a blundering elephant. He was up one step—two steps—three steps—four! He was out in the open—underneath us!

"Let him have it!" I whispered.

Down went the old net over him! A moment later I around the corner into the stairway! I dived headfirst—striking him, almost before he started pawing.

It was comical, in a way. He had no idea of course, of what had hit him. All at once, down out of the dark, this soft thing was over him; he was clawing, clawing, like a pig in a bag. And I was on him—diving headfirst—one hundred and sixty pounds of meat striking him in the middle.

Down he went, head backward, down that steep narrow old-time staircase. He was underneath, I on top—and staying there by main awkwardness and the grace of God, more than by any virtue of my own.

BANG! Whang! Smash! Down the old stairway, steep as the forecastle hatchway on a vessel, we went to the bottom, I grabbing him, hanging on, through that net.

He didn't move. He didn't budge. I unloosed him finally.

"What—what has happened?" asked the strained voice of the girl over me.

"I don't know!" I said. And I stopped, listening, sick. I thought perhaps I'd broken his neck. And I'd never killed a man before.

"Is he dead?"

"No," I said, with a flush of pleasure, as I said it. "He's still breathing."

And I listened again—my heart dropping once more, at his heavy breathing. "He isn't conscious," I said; "that's sure."

"Come. Come!" the girl called to me. "You must go—while there is yet time. Before they come—the others—hearing this!"

"Yes," I said. "But come here. Help me out of this net." For I was all snarled up in the thing—fingers, buttons, even the catches on my shoe laces.

I got up—picked myself free—she helping.

It was black as your hat in there. And that great brute and everything he had was snarled up in that net. I started fumbling over him, trying to find that pistol, but she wouldn't have it. I must go—now!

"Run!" she whispered. "Hasten! Run—while there is yet time; while he is not conscious; before the others come—to see what was all this noise here!"

"All right," I said finally. "Come on—come!"

"No, leave me. Leave me!" she whispered. "I clog you. I delay you. With me you have no chance—no chance at all."

"I'd look well," I said, "wouldn't I, going without you now?"

"But," she said, pushing me toward the door. "I will not. I cannot. It would be useless. They would overtake us."

"They!" I said. "Where are they? I've seen nobody here—except this one man."

"They must be here, nevertheless," she said.

"Why do you say so?"

"They always are."

"Let's take a look," I said, "and see!" And I put out my hand and opened the front door—pulling it back against the dead weight of that man upon the floor.

"Wait. Be careful," she said, holding on to me.

"I will," I said; and stepped out of the front door into the still night—and she with me.

WE STOOD there in the doorway, screened by those old lilac bushes, listening.

The night was still as a tomb—not a sound but that everlasting whistling buoy way off there, and the faint wash of the sea, out beyond that slate-colored opening to the beach.

We heard nothing, saw nothing—though the night was not so dark to us, coming out of that black house. We stood peering—and saw still just one moving thing. Over us the bar of the Great North light still came, passed, came again, and made the darkness and the silence greater, more lonely and more threatening.

Suddenly the girl gripped me—shrank back. "Look!" she whispered.

I peered out westward, through the lilac bush, and saw the figure of a man on the faint yellowish rim of a sand hill, black against the sky; guarding the path inland, apparently. She was right. They were there—whoever they might be—waiting. If we could go—get away, we'd better do so!

I stepped back and closed the door into the house softly. "Come," I said. "Quick! Let's run the other way—while we can. That one hasn't heard us, anyway."

There were two paths out of the old Hollow—one where this black figure stood; the other through the entrance from the beach.

"Come," I said; and started out to avoid both of them.

We moved in close to the house and peered around the corner. There was no one there at any rate. Just the black shadows along the house; the black patches of grass upon the sides of the Hollow. Looking carefully, we saw that was all—just black grass and black bayberry bushes.

"Come on," I said to her. "This way, so the house will be between us—and that one on the hill."

We stole along—watching every step, but seeing no one else yet. "And when we get on that sand slope," I whispered, "let's get down and crawl—as near those black grass patches as we can. And be especially careful toward the top, where they might catch us against the sky."

We went up on our hands and knees—I first, crawling over the top and looking on ahead across the flatter sand hills to the north. There was nothing there—no one. Nothing at all that seemed moving or living except the light.

It was not so very dark, though the stars were thick and dim. You could see miles, the whole of the empty shore, in that kind of luminous light the sand itself seems to give out at night. There was no one—nothing on the whole level place but the sea lights: the white and red of Studdin' Sails,

the keen white light from Great Point, and out to westward—beyond the black stretch of the Great Marshes—the little nervous Barnacle light that jumped and stopped, and jumped and stopped. And over the whole thing the beam of the Great North light wheeled with slow-seeming swiftness—and was gone.

There was nothing to be seen in the whole deserted place that gave even the appearance of living but that one dim black figure and the lights.

"Come on," I said to her. And she crawled after me down the other side of the slope.

"Let's run for it," I said, and started, bending down, holding her hand to steady her.

My idea was that if we got down on the beach, and found it was clear sailing there, we could work our way around to the north, under cover of the first of the sand hills off the beach, until we got opposite Folger's Woods—the point of it which comes down nearest to the shore. And once there—out of the open—we could count on getting safely back to the village.

But we were counting on something that wasn't going to happen. We got on well until we were almost to the beach. There was no one to be seen. And we were hurrying on, making good progress. We came to where the last of the sand hills pitches down to the beach; started stumbling, sliding down it.

"Look out," I warned her.

JUST as I said it, her foot caught and she twisted over to one side, with a little groan.

"Are you hurt?" I asked her.

"It is my foot. I cannot—cannot rise," she whispered. And after a minute more: "My ankle. It is sprained. Or broken."

"Wait!" I said. "Don't try to use it. Wait!"

This altered things. I looked around, and my eye fell on an old piece of wreck—the side of that schooner, the *Mary B. Davis*, that had come ashore in the winter—sticking out of the sand.

"The first thing to do," I said, "now, is to get over there, under cover."

If we couldn't run for it, there was only one other thing: to hide. And we were lucky, in that bare open territory, to have some place near by to hide in.

"Wait," I said. "Don't do that. Here!" I said, and I started taking her up in my arms.

"You cannot—you cannot carry me!" she told me, probably thinking of me as a cripple.

"Why not?" I said, sensitive as usual. "I've got two arms, if I haven't got two hands, and you weigh nothing at all."

So I took her light body in my arms and slumped through the soft sand until I got her over and set her down by the shadow of the wreck, where it made its overhang toward the first sand hill.

"Does it pain you much?" I asked her.

"No—not so greatly," she said, lying, I could hear, by the tone of her voice; and started taking off the shoe, the low foreign-looking slipper she had on when we ran out from the house—which was probably partly to blame for the accident.

"Let me help you," I told her, and took it off.

It wasn't a break apparently—but a pretty bad sprain.

"Wait," I said; and tearing my handkerchief I bound it up. "There," I said. "Is that better?"

"Yes," she whispered, "and thank you. But now—now you must go."

"You can't go—not yet!"

"You. Not I!"

"And leave you here?" I asked her.

"Yes. Yes, by all means. Twice you have saved my life. But now go, quickly!"

"I'd be likely to," I said. "Wouldn't I?"

"Go. Go," she kept urging me. "You do not know the danger."

It's time I did, I thought to myself.

I stood up, and looked around. There still was nothing to be seen or heard, but the sound of Old Man's Misery grunting in the tide, and the lights across the sand and behind us now across the empty sea, the riding lights of that vessel I had watched the day before. There was just one human being that we had seen so far. And by this time I was convinced that he was all there was. And he was back there watching the house we had escaped from—just a dim, distant black spot upon the top of the hill. But except for him we were absolutely alone.

"I'll go, maybe," I said, humoring her. "But first I'm going to learn just what this danger is, so I'll know what I'm doing here. Come," I said, "we'll sit here—and watch. And ten feet away they couldn't tell us from a part of the wreck, if we sit still. Nor



The girl pulled back, without effect, at the big man who held the lamp. "Tell him, father," she cried out. "For God's love, tell him!"

hear us, if we keep our voices down," I told her. For the tide having turned, the waves were getting noisier now. "Unless," I said, "you don't want to tell me."

"If I did not," she whispered, "wish to tell you anything—all I know—I would be most ungrateful."

So I helped her sit up on the edge of the wreck where it was lowest.

"Tell me," I said, "who are you? What is this thing that's going on here?"

"I am Irina—Irina Vonstrom, by name. My father's name, Lief Vonstrom," she said, and stopped short, her voice breaking, at the thought of him.

"And this thing that is following you—what is it?" I asked her, changing the subject.

"It is the Zetka," she told me, for the third time.

"**T**HE Zetka," I said, repeating that crazy word after her. For up to that time—before there was so much about it in the papers—I knew nothing myself about it, or that other thing in Russia it was patterned after.

"The Society of the great good Revolution that working underground will save mankind by terror and by murder across all the world. In the fashion adopted first in czarist Russia," she explained to me, a harsh bitterness in her voice, "by the most terrible of secret societies there—that most feared power of all that tries and kills in secret its enemies—but first, before death, must often tear and torture them—thus causing fear to oppose its favored government."

"But this, the Zetka," she went on, "is not for one country alone, but all the world. Not large it is, but most carefully chosen—of the most bitter, most sharp, most strong-willed of those fearless, desperate theoretical minds, who across the world today have determined they will save mankind by fear—by torture, sudden death, assassination."

"Across the entire world they go today, preaching to those peoples who suffer or are angry that they must free themselves—now after the Great War, or never. By the strongest possible means. So out of Russia they go, and from eastern Europe, carrying the message to all mankind—no matter where."

"Like the old-time religious missionaries," I said, "sent out from this country!"

"Yes. Perhaps. Yet more like the cus-

toms of religions in the East—and the savage borders of the earth—in preaching a holy war, which is, as you know, the most terrible and cruel of all wars."

"I know what you mean," I said.

"And this preachment, arousing its hearers for a last holy war, is most craftily and intelligently made, following after the new and logical faith produced by this group in Russia—the faith of meeting hate with hate, suffering with sharper suffering—in secret and by stealth, when required—in countries where the new ideas of this new religion do not yet control."

"And so across the entire world they go," she went on—"through Europe, Asia, Africa and here—sowing everywhere the new faith of hate and vengeance; and gathering everywhere, from peoples who suffer and long have had misrule and pain, the special and old and barbarous instruments of torture which their cruel savage masters have used—to bring still sharper suffering and terror to those everywhere who have—they would say—in the past always caused it to the people."

I stared at her, when she stopped for a minute.

"Such instruments, for example," she went on, "as you have seen here tonight, in this torture of the Cossack's Cap upon my father."

"The Cossack's Cap!" I repeated after her.

"Russian in name—as it is Russian in origin. An old, old cruelty, which the Zetka uses upon its enemies in Russia."

"But this is not Russia," I said, looking around that place—the old back shore I had known all my life.

"No," she said slowly. "This is America, where merely the Zetka would come first, in secret—because there are more immigrants of its nation here than in any other country, to work through and upon. Driving them always through this society of murder and of terror, which works in secret upon the foreigners here—those most easily terrified."

"The Russians?"

"Not Russians only. But foreigners of every kind—though of eastern Europe most—from where they know, as Russians do, the great happy Revolution—and know what it will do. Have you not read," she asked me now, "in the papers of those murders, those explosions, those many killings in the coal mines in the past few months—

of that most ^{terrible} one especially to the west, among all those foreign laborers?"

"Yes," I said. "Of course."

"That was Zetka."

"You mean—"

"What would it be? Would the laborers alone kill themselves, blow up mines in which they worked? Would such things as this go on year after year—among the foreigners in this country, without some one who in secret has caused it to be? Oh, the foreigners, the workmen who are in the mines, the great factories of metal, all know this, if you others in America all do not!"

I looked around the empty beach and shore, while I got this in my head. The shaft of the Great North light swung half a dozen times above us before I came with my next question.

"THESE men," I said, looking back toward Spindle Hollow. "What are they? This Mannik?"

"He is the one who killed so many for the Zetka. The murderer—their killer!"

"Their killer!"

"Why not?" she answered. "If there is murder, shooting, death by dynamite—in secret, month after month—then there is best some one murderer, who does the work skilfully—not to be found out; who follows carefully after those who are marked to be killed—as with us, my father and myself."

"With you!" I cried out.

"Have you not seen for yourself?" she asked me, in a level voice.

"But why? For what reason?"

"We are traitors—more than traitors—to the Zetka. And traitors to them in the end must die—if they can kill them! How could it be otherwise with them—outside the law—if they wish to keep secret, as they always have, what they are and do."

"Traitors?" I asked her. "In what way were you traitors?"

And she told me then, starting from the beginning: "It concerns the Formula—the Catalyst."

"The Catalyst?" I said.

"The invention—of which they have such terrible need today in Russia—which they must have at once; the invention of my father which will make power, electricity without fire—directly, from wood or from coal."

Then she told me, sitting there on that

wreck, listening to the sound of the whistling buoy and watching the shaft of the North light coming and going over our heads, the curious way it came about that we two were sitting there in the night together—fleeing, watching, threatened by a common danger.

Her father, it seemed, was a chemist in Sweden; her mother a Russian—both educated, both of the Intelligentsia, both radical. Coming to this country in the hard times in Sweden following the war, the wife died, the man starved, grew more radical, bitter and theoretical still, was brought at last, full of anger, grief and hate, into this Zetka.

"But without knowledge," said his daughter, "as how should he know?"

"That it was a murder society?"

"Yes."

"But he was not a Russian," I said, objecting.

"It is not a society of Russians only, as I have said. It is merely that it gets its principles, its leaders out of Russia—as does all Revolution now. But many—most, perhaps—in this Zetka are not Russians today, but foreigners of other kinds. As is Mannik, for example, a Hungarian."

"And then?" I said, prompting her. "What came next?"

"Then he found—my father—this thing, for which so many, many chemists have tried. This Catalyst, for making power electrically without fire. And gave it—promised he would give it—to the great good Revolution in Russia."

"And then?"

"Then he found what it was—the Zetka—what it did continually through such men as Mannik. And after this, he fled—fled here—to this world's ending—to escape! You see?"

I saw it now as she went on telling, how they planned to come here, to this last and quietest corner of the world—hoping to escape those after them—the vengeance of this Zetka—these murderers bound for their own sake to find him. And how from the first they had feared that they were on their track.

"For they must have it—the Formula!" she said. "It is the one thing—the one advance that comes to them out of all they first expected—from this country—from all the world. All else has been failure. And now today within Russia the leaders of the

Revolution there are desperate—for industry, for manufacturing, for power. The life of their government, their very own lives themselves depend on what these men—these here of the Zetka—have said that they will bring—what they have promised surely to bring to them: this way of making power quickly in great quantities, from what fuel they in Russia have.”

“WILL it work?” I asked her. “This invention—has it been tried?”

“Oh, many, many times! It works—and makes its power with a little fraction of the fuel needed otherwise.”

“A thing like that,” I said, thinking, “would be worth millions.”

“It is priceless,” she said, “priceless; but to them more than priceless. It is life itself—the life of all their following—their hopes—their government! And so you see how we withdrawing it become traitors—worse than traitors—the arch-traitors of the world!”

“And so they come,” I said, “to get this Formula back?”

“And meanwhile—always fearing them—always dreading that they will find him, take it from him—from me, if he did not live—my father has hidden it.”

“And that paper?” I asked her.

“Was the directions for my memory—where to find the hiding-place. That this man Mannik—sent no doubt to get it—lurking about outside perhaps for several nights—was torturing my father to explain, when you came—and—and he died.”

She stopped, choking, as it came back to her. And I sat there until she controlled herself again, my mind wandering over her explanation—piecing it together, picking out the points I didn’t understand.

I put my hand in my pocket suddenly, remembering that paper—those directions for the hiding-place of this Formula should be there. I gave a sigh of satisfaction, finding it; and I saw again, as clearly as if I read them, the words upon the little crumpled piece of paper:

Studdin’ Sails. Great Point. Barnacle. North. Gneiss. 2.2.

I knew then only the first part—the names of those four lighthouses that came

first—and whose lights I could see now, still winking, sweeping over my head.

“He didn’t get any idea of it—that Mannik?” I asked her. “Of that hiding-place?”

“No, he could not. For we neither one have told him, and without us who know tell him, no one could find it ever—by any chance. The plan of markings my father made for this was far too subtle, too refined!”

“They might be ranges,” I said to myself, thinking. “Light ranges in the night.” And looked around and figured how it would work out, and where such ranges would come together. I could see that much—as possible—but there were a lot of other things about that hiding-place, and about the whole affair, that were still away beyond my understanding.

“One thing I don’t understand,” I said to her—for it puzzled me especially. “If they were after you—these murderers, these madmen at the head of this crazy criminal thing; and they sent in their murderer and bully to take his Formula from you—out here in this lonesome place where they had you cornered!”

“Yes?”

“If that is all true,” I said, after thinking a minute, “what was it this paid murderer was afraid of? Why didn’t he just shoot me down when I broke in there—instead of running off like a mad lamplighter, when he saw me?”

“That I do not know myself,” Irina Vonstrom answered, in a slow voice, “unless—”

“Unless what?”

“Unless he feared some one was following him also.”

“That’s it exactly,” I said. “That’s the way it struck me.”

And I stopped. We both looked around.

“Do you see him any more,” she asked me, “there on the hill?”

“No. I don’t.”

It was dim enough, that black spot on the sand hill, at best. But now it seemed to be gone.

“Look. What is that?” asked Irina Vonstrom. And we sat still, both staring where she looked straight before us to the faint black line of woods, against the western sky, across the sand.

“It is!” she said. “It is! He is coming here!”

Back into the arms of Irina’s enemies we fell, and it looked as if I was to suffer the fate of her father—as I will tell in August EVERYBODY’S, out July 15.

Tosca of the Tenements

Two Points of View Strikingly Contrasted in This Story of an Ambitious Woman and Her Experience When She Went Out Alone to Achieve Success

By Stanley Olmsted

Illustration by C. H. Taffs

FOR an appreciable moment after the rising of the curtain, as the dramatist might put it, the stage remains empty. The room is one of a suite in a modern hotel, and is furnished with that sparse luxury, highly conventional, representing the ideas of an interior decorator whose taste for the ultra never oversteps that to which people are growing accustomed. Nothing is more profitable than to be revolutionary, provided one follows the beaten track. Originality is adorable even to the dullest. It is the most marketable thing in the world, always provided it has been thought of enough already. The unmarried gentleman of lisping speech who "designed" the trappings of this suite has a country house and a town house, and goes to Palm Beach in the winter, where he takes orders for innumerable country and town houses. But let there be no mistaking. He is not to appear in this one-act drama. He is a mere digression of our opening paragraph.

Nor is this a playlet. The curtain has risen, to be sure. But the present tense must give way to the narrative, with the passing observations that on the floor of the room is a carpet of black velvet bordered with wistaria, that the windows are hung with stripes, black and lavender, that a similar striped material is in evidence on a reticent sprinkling of spindly chairs and settees, that discreet flashes of coppery gold gleam here and there, that the room is a sitting-room, adjoining a boudoir which in

turn adjoins a bedroom and bath. The sole incongruous note is but temporary. It is a table in the farther corner, laid and ready for the repast of ten guests. Its white napery and silver from the hotel pantries, twelve floors below, are exotic, all but grotesque, in such an interior. For whatsoever pleasures of the flesh might be conjured as logical to this color scheme, these softly spilled lights of gold and lavender, that of gregarious eating and drinking is not among them. Two persons, perhaps, might be pictured supping wine and munching truffles in such a retreat—even four, by stretching the imagination. But when nine or ten forgather for such a purpose it might as well be an Elks sociable; and Elks sociables are not conceivable in a bonbon box, enlarged to the scale of feminine habitation.

It remains only to be stated that the hour is midnight.

INTO the silence of Mrs. Raymond Raynor's sitting-room at the Balforado drifted muted voices and low laughter from the hotel corridor outside. There drifted also the clicking of a key in the latch. The door leading to the brief passageway which in turn led to the sitting-room did not, however, instantly open. Some unaccustomed hand was fumbling at the knob.

"These Yale locks!" said a voice, resonant bass, with a touch of portentousness, a touch of self-consciousness suggesting a Shakespearean actor, or possibly a vicar. "They

try the patience. You are sure they gave us the right key?"

A rill of laughter answered him, silvery soft; elusively weary laughter with a dying fall.

"I told you this lock was difficult. But you would insist. Give me the key. It opens easily enough when you're used to it."

"No, no. I'm getting the combination all right. Just a minute, Mrs. Raynor—Marion. Ah—there we are!"

"Always determined — unconquerable with the smallest obstacle as well as the biggest. Otto Aronson, you're a great man!"

"You go on in," directed her escort; and now for the first time it might have been suspected perhaps that English had not always been his language. "You're tired already. You relax a bit and I practise here awhile. I close and unlock this door over and again until it's easy. I practise my Yale-lock technique here and now."

Languidly she trailed past him, through the brief entryway, on into the black and lavender and dull gold pervasiveness beyond. She was limp as an unwatered flower with the sleepless nights behind her, yet about her was a certain exaltation, like an aura. She walked as one who moves in a spotlight conjured of wistful victory.

She threw herself into the easiest of the ornate uneasy chairs. She let the scarlet mandarin coat, with its embossment of silver dragons, fall halfway from her shoulders. She listened, absently amused, to the soft shutting of the door, the clicking of the key inserted from without, the fumbling, the opening, the light, determined closing repeated, twice, thrice, until at last there was no hesitation. Motionless she listened. In her long straight gown of silver-broidered black, her ash-blond hair piled high, she might have been a pagan empress, harkening to the ritualism of slaves at their devotionals before her.

There was a final more vigorous slam from within, and Aronson entered, holding up the key.

"So that's that!" he said, ponderously tossing it into the air and catching it in his fist which closed over it, seeming to forget it.

"Just lay it on the mantel," said the woman.

He obeyed, and turned toward her again,

holding out his hands, mutely requesting her own. She let him lift them in the spirit in which one gratifies a child deserving indulgence. He bent stockily toward her, peering into her face. He was short but of Napoleonic bearing with a heavy shock of hair going gray. His eyes tried to fasten her gaze, which wandered beyond them. They smoldered in their smudging like coals, but the elocutionary elaboration of his voice belied them. She always felt assurance when she evaded his eyes, for by the fervors of his voice he invariably outdid himself, giving her the grateful security that he but felt himself a character in a play. Yet only for a brief period of his early manhood had he been an actor. Long before he reached his forties he had passed beyond all that.

He looked about him approvingly. "You move into a so swell place." He nodded gravely in three directions.

"You insisted so—seemed so sure I'd be able to afford it."

He nodded again, his summary missing no detail. "That is right. That 'model tenement' where we write your play—*pfui!*—with all the broke painter, writer, sculptor who come and who go and who loaf on the wharf—it was no place for a lady like you."

"I wonder!" she sighed. "What is one but a tenement woman after all—when one's own homes are all faded away? What is this made-to-measure place but a sort of sublimated tenement?"

"MARION RAYNOR," he began, measuring out the syllables of her name, still holding her negative hands, his dull belustered irises boring toward her blue ones which glanced them off like granite-ice glancing a mattock, "do you realize?" The hint of double s's was in his z's. "Do you take it in already? You have arrive! You have arrive! You're a famous woman from this night on and on and on—higher and higher—up and up and up—"

She smiled. "You have discovered a way to feel certain about all that. I wish I could."

"You write 'nother play—better than 'Tenement Tosca.' I help you all over again—you start 'nother play tomorrow. No, not tomorrow—two, three days' rest. I help you once more already—every scene

—every line.” In his *v*’s were hints of *f*’s. “I have ideas, ideas for you—all, all for you. This week maybe you begin the comedy—different from ‘Tosca’; finer; more subtle; more brilliant. We have talk the story already. I have ideas, ideas, all for you—every one for you.”

“Thank you, dear Otto Aronson,” she said sweetly, and managed to withdraw her hands and arise. “All of you have been so kind—everybody.” She moved about the room, lissomely uplifted. “I—a famous woman—from this night on—oh, *mon Dieu!*” She made a little moue with her mouth, pausing before a curved plaque of mirror to retouch the piling of her ash-blond hair; pausing again to take from him the scarlet mandarin coat with the embossed silver dragons which he lifted from where it had slid to the floor.

Carrying the crumpled scarlet burden, she disappeared into the room beyond. “I must be my own maid tonight,” she told him as she went. “I let my old Bunty go directly from the theater. Dear old cockney soul! Our play meant nothing to her—but for these four or five all-nights of work she has watched and worried over me. I could sleep some during the day, but she, poor soul, could not.”

She reappeared almost immediately, resuming the thread. “Our little celebration’s sure to keep us very late—so I sent her home.”

Blithely she moved toward the table laid for ten, with its napery and silver, and flowers. “Isn’t it pretty?” she said, vaguely restless, and touched a flower here, and relaid a piece of silver there. “Bunty did it all for me before we left for the theater. She wouldn’t let the waiters touch it. They came and went like vassals at her beck and call, bringing, taking away, as she ordered. I never saw such a tyrant, such fastidiousness—and really it isn’t half bad, is it?”

She seemed to be prattling more for herself than for him. He had not moved from where her cloak had dropped. His gaze had never left her. Even in the room beyond she had felt it boring like a gimlet through the wistaria-and-black striped hangings that curtained her off. Motionless he stood, his head hunched forward as if in reverie, his coal-glowing eyes beating out against her like the focus of a burning-glass.

Harder than ever she prattled ahead.

“The moment the others get here, you see, supper is to be brought right up—smoking-hot! A good solid supper for working people—the dears! How tired they all were when we began tonight—and how rested when we knew all was well! I’m going to play the old-fashioned hostess; I’m going to just heap up everybody’s plate with steak that Ambroise promises to fix in some royal and epicurean way, as soon as I send down word they’re here—some especial style that he scorns to waste on ordinary vulgar guests in the dining-room. It must be Rowena’s new frock that’s delaying them—but they ought to be here any minute, surely—”

Otto Aronson, producer of plays, cleared his throat.

“Marion—Marion Raynor—”

But she was adjusting a curtain, moving forward a severely plain black vase on a limitlessly filigreed gold stand, even stooping for a futile pull at the ebon velvet of the rug. She was wound up with chatter like a clock with ticking.

“ALL of them, though, are flickers beside Gilda—Gilda Leonardi. Oh, what a genius stroke that was when you went across last summer and imported her, Otto Aronson! How do you keep finding them—and getting them for so little—so full of gratitude, out of hungry Europe! Can’t you hear her now in our great scene? You thought of it, Otto—you, not me. ‘I gif me to you—yes—an’ what you see in my face but ze hate? I gif me to you—yes, yes—an’ what you feel in my touch but ze loathing? In your own way what you call ze justice, in your own way what you say iss ze gratitude, I pay you—I pay you! Ze debt shall not stand—ze debt shall be wipe’ away; an’ I tell you zat efery kiss I gif iss a malediction—and efery caress you take iss a curse!’”

“Bravo!” interrupted Aronson. “I wanted that you should write your play already and act it, too; I could have created you even that! I could have—”

“This play will make a star of her, Otto; we’ll have to put out her name bigger than yours or mine before three weeks of the run. Isn’t she gorgeous? Wasn’t she luminous? Didn’t she glow? When I came out on the stage with her—when you made me do



"For twelve long month'"—he hurtled his words like spears—"I create your success—and seven times seven hells burn me all the time. Volcanoes simmer not forever."

that after the fifth call I felt it was wrong; I felt it was she who had made the play—not me—not me—”

She was not watching him and did not see the flicker of his heavy smile at her first slip of forgetfulness in the claim of uncollaborative authorship which had been his bestowal. She was, for the public, the playwright and he the producer. . . . Well, let her go on forgetting in this pretty fashion. No harm in that if—yes, yes, it was all right already. . . .

She was at the supper table again. She had praised her faithful Bunty's taste—yet she was changing all the schemes of the floral garnishings; picking them asunder as if with fevered fingers, rearranging them with darting hands that flickered in and out like May-flies. And ever and again her eyes dropped as his unrelenting gaze summoned them anew.

“It was Gilda Leonardi—her triumph,” she rambled on. “Mark my words, Otto: the critics will tell us so tomorrow. My ‘Tosca of the Tenements’ is merely what the Christian Scientists call a ‘channel’—it is Gilda you’ve given them—not my play.”

“Marion Raynor—”

This time the speaking of her name, scarcely audible, held a note utterly unfamiliar, some imperative quality, so that, unforewarned, her hands fell limply like perishing moths against the straight lines of her gown.

“Haven’t you play with your rugs, your curtains, your supper table long enough? They’ll do. Cannot you talk to me, Marion Raynor, now that we are for the little while alone already? Don’t I deserve it? Not?”

“Why,” she laughed nervously, “I’ve been doing nothing else! Are you ridiculing me?”

He had not budged from that motionless posture, his head slightly bowed, glowering out to her from unfathomable abysses of his theatrical consciousness. She moved toward him with irresistible impulsion of steps that yet lagged heavily.

“I mean talk to *me*—not babble to yourself. Marion Raynor—you haven’t yet told me. How does it feel to know that tomorrow you wake up and can say already, ‘I am famous’? to know that the fight you have made, and I make with you, is over; that the problem is solve’; that from now on the pearly gates, as you Christians say, are flung open-wide—open-wide?”

Everybody's Magazine, July, 1924

“How can one be sure of all that, Otto Aronson?”

“There is not any more rights for the doubts! After the great cheering I run into all three critics—see?—what you might call the New York Triumvirate; after I have push you on the stage when they call for you till I think they split open the top of the house. And then when they *look* upon you—ah, ah!—after that sallow Ukrainian-Sicilian Leonardi—what you might call the mongrel—ah, *ach!* If you yourself had play that part—you with your beauty like a tall flower that sway!”

“Very dear of you to keep saying that, dear Otto; but you’re far too great an impresario not to know better—not even you could ever make me into an actress.”

He shook a cogitating head, though with a gaze that never relaxed. “It is the idle conjecture, maybe—but there is no more right for the doubts: Marion Raynor is made. I do not have to praise her to the critics. They all eat out of my hand—when they have see’ you! It is one of my methods—to make them eat out of my hand without that they know; I fix the critics way, way ahead, one by each—without that they guess; and even when they blame my plays they talk and talk and feed my plays—”

“I told you you were a great man,” she said, “before you entered that door—compelling my latch-key to open it—”

“For the first time of all the times,” he complained. “Always before, your so ugly old cockney woman you call ‘Bunty’ hang about like a gargoyle—”

SHE had sunk into one of the settees and he fixed pillows, ponderously, behind her back.

“I tuck you in,” he said. “You have chatter of a hundred other things; now tell me—I do not demand; no, I beg and implore—tell me, now that I have make you, now that there is no more the doubt, what you think of *me*—how you feel to me. Tell me of me. I wait for that—I hunger for that.”

She was cuddling among the pillows below the range of his rapacious stare. “How do I feel toward you? Dear old Otto! My feelings could not be more grateful now than they have been for months upon months. In your presence—when we work together, I mean—I am but a hollow reed

with one stop—one clear, ringing note of endless gratitude. Surely you must know that—must have felt it. It is as if the welkin rang with exulting trumpets, proclaiming: ‘She was alone, and impoverished and unhappy and distraught—and he appeared, as if from nowhere, and held his strong, his really mighty, hand behind her, and she wrote “Tosca of the Tenements” with the unfailing patience and guidance of the great Otto Aronson; and the play was produced with all the endless magic of his genius, all the open sesame of his prestige, and—and—he’d even have me think he’s “fixed” the very critics themselves. And for all I know to the contrary he may have, for there seems to be nothing in the world, nothing in the universe, he cannot do!’ ”

He drew a deep breath. “*Ach!*” he said, throwing back his thick-curved head with the instinctive sense of the scene that always diminished her terror before the deferred unbarring of his soul. “*Ach!* That sound good—good. Such words are wine—when they come from you; they leap in my veins—when they come from you, you say that and you can mean it! At fifteen I was the immigrant selling the newspaper—without the English; and my heart was the artist and I starve and am cheated. At twenty-five I play great rôles on the stage—first in my native language; then I try the English and they starve me some more. At forty I bring from my old Europe one star, another star, and they pack the houses that understand never a word because they *act* and acting is not language. And before I am fifty I have build my own most magnificent of the theaters and have open it tonight with a play by Marion Raynor—Mrs. Raymond Raynor—one time of Newport all the same as New York; one time of Raymond Lodge in Tuxedo, and the furore of stupid society in Paris, too, for a little while—yes, and London already! And the money wreck she will tell to nobody and the scandal so few of them know about the husband bring her to me—and now Mrs. Jack Raynor say to me, ‘There is nothing you cannot do.’ And what she say to me is all that count—all that could ever count with me again already—”

He was pacing now, back and forth, his intense Semitic face glowing steady as the flame of a trimmed lamp. “*Ach*, that sound good—good—from you!”

Often when he was cautious she had heard him speak a nearly perfect English; but in moments of irritated stress he fell below all syntax, just as at times like this he rose above it. “Oh, believe to me that, little girl!” he pleaded, and again held forth to her two half-supplicating hands.

“But if it came to telling you how I feel about myself,” she hastened to go on, “—well, I should have to admit that I’m not nearly so elated as I am—frightened. Yes—that’s it—just somehow mysteriously, bafflingly frightened! Surely you’ll ridicule me now! But tonight when I went out into that blaze and saw them standing up everywhere, waving and cheering and calling my name, I felt only dizziness—strange—sickening—not ‘footlight vertigo’ as I’ve heard you name it—altogether different from the terror of a child getting up to speak its piece in school—much more indefinable than that. Some nightmarish shadow seemed to stand close behind me—to keep whispering in my ear, mocking above the tumult: ‘Marion Raynor, you’re having, after but the briefest period of misfortune, a great dance, a glorious dance—the world all yours as never before. *How are you going to pay the piper?*’ ”

“*Ach*, little girl, little girl!” One of the hands she feigned not to see hovered close above her head as if to stroke it.

“And then, as I looked out at that yawning cavern, I made out a single face among all the faces; perhaps I only imagined it—but all at once the fear left me and there was nothing to replace it but a great hurt, an endless pain at the misadjustment of everything. I wanted to weep; I wanted to weep!”

“A single face! What you say? And you want to cry?”

“It was the face of Ray—my husband. Maybe it was all fancy—but I could see no other—”

HE WENT rigid, suppressing an oath. “That fellow—why, you know as well as me he deserves to be—where you had the power to put him—”

She held up a warning hand. “Don’t!” she pleaded. “Please don’t—not tonight, when I have seen his face. Poor old Ray! He could never grow up; and he *was* punished, surely: everything stripped from him—his fortune—and mine—his good name—even, at last—his wife—”

"*Nil nisi bonum*," grunted Aronson. "We drop the subject. I have never the honor to meet or see him."

"If you had ever looked upon that clear-eyed boy just once," she said, "you would better understand. Nature surely must have made him clean. It was just that he was idolized to his ruin: pampered at home; a football hero at college; socially adored with his clean limbs and clean-cut face. Oh, I'm not trying to defend him! He never took time to pause—to realize that there could be law or limitation— Perhaps he was in the end an impossible husband." She smiled charmingly. "Perhaps all husbands are that!"

"Marriage is a poor way to succeed at the business of being in love," said Aronson in his most censored manner with the effect of delivering a text. "It is there that I agree already." He straightened himself and poured a goblet of water at the table.

"But he could never lose his charm altogether," she went on; "not even in those blackest hours. I can hear him now, his fair head all tousled, wistfully confessing to me: 'I can love one woman intermittently until death itself, Marion—intermittently; but somehow I just can't exclusively.' . . . Poor ruined boy! He made me think of some urchin whipped in school."

He set down his goblet of water, eyeing her narrowly. "When you sentimentalize over him like that, girl, you traduce your own intelligence. You know he act to you like a damned scoundrel—"

"Oh, please, please don't!" she begged. "I know there've been times when I've gone most of the way agreeing with you—even confiding in you; but I saw his face tonight— Please—let's just forget."

"It is the last subject already that interest' me," he nodded. "There is but one thing that interest' me. That you know already."

"Dear old enthusiast Otto Aronson—madly infatuated with producing plays and making stars and—creating playwrights!"

He was looking down upon her once more, searching, scrutinizing. "You are one so bad actress," he said. "On second thoughts I make me glad you not play your own Tosca; plenty of beauty all right, all right—irresistible beauty what call aloud to make deaf such men as me. But you say right—never I make you to an actress."

Everybody's Magazine, July, 1924

You know perfectly well I speak not of plays. You know perfectly well what it is that I mean."

FROM his voice the familiar note which seemed ever groping for dramatic value had vanished. She felt quietude in him—and dogged finality. Fear came to her afresh; not this time in the quick twitching flash to which she had accustomed herself, learning to ignore. Fear gathered about her dully, a chill that crept.

"But what can be keeping our people?" she asked, evading the point, and sprang up. "They can't be much longer, surely; were anything amiss, surely they'd telephone. I'll call down to Ambroise for the supper now—he's probably railing at us in seven languages—"

"Call to your so temperamental Balforado chef when you like. He send up supper for two—not for ten."

"For two? But what are you—" Then she felt ashamed of having been so startled. Of course he was but jesting at the lateness of the hour which found them still alone together.

"I take a liberty," he went on very quietly. "I feel these first hours after we win the victory—these hours that never come back—they legitimately mine. After I tuck you in the car, you remind yourself, I go back inside the stage door a moment. I tell them you are too tired, too prostrate with the great excitement—I postpone the celebration till tomorrow night. They all understand perfect. These hours of our triumph that come not again—you would not deny me them!"

She had gone very white. "That is going a little far," she said; "but I'm trying not to blame you. Of course when you did all that you couldn't have known that Bunty was not to be here. Perhaps it was thoughtless of me not to realize—not to arrange to sit with you talking it over as many hours as you wanted to; I see what you mean, dear friend. But Bunty *isn't* here—"

"She is not, thank God!"

"And it isn't getting any earlier." She strove to smile nonchalantly, strove not to seem either unfriendly or inhospitable. "So there you are!" she concluded, extending two hands invisibly atremble.

"I see your Ambroise, too, before we begin tonight. He, too, understand—supper

for two; he is not impatient. And there will be wine—priceless wine I get in Italy in the summer and hoard for this moment. Ambroise know—and you know, too—it is mine, this moment—mine—mine—”

With the effect of steady compression he had been moving closer. Suddenly his arms went about her, pinning her own to her sides as in a vise. There was naught of smoldering now. His face was the flare of an open furnace, white-hot. The cry she might have uttered seemed stifled. She held her head far back and felt that he applied the brand to her forehead.

“For twelve long month’”—he hurtled his words like spears—“I create your success—create you—all my hurried hours to you when you bid—creating of you the artist. Without me you never write so much as the little parlor charade. I make myself patient to forget the woman in you; I overcome, I strangle the sense of the man in myself; I put you over—I put you across—and seven times seven hells burn me all the time. Volcanoes simmer not forever in their craters—there come the time when the lava’s got to pour!”

“Let me go,” she gasped, striving to scream with the dregs of forespent breath. “Oh, let me go!”

HE RELAXED his grip on her arms. She half fell, struggling backward. He caught her, gently enough now, and she slipped through his arms to the floor. He sank to his knees on the sable velvet of the carpet as she crouched there, black on black, hysterical, haggard, in the disarray he had made.

“*Ach, tse, tse, tsel*” he deplored with altogether sympathetic clucking of his tongue. “Marion, sweetheart, I make the mistake—this is not the way! You give yourself to me, yes, but not because I force you so brutal. You give yourself to me because—there is in you the fairness, there is in you the justice. You think it out yourself already. *Tse, tse, tsel* And I scare you so foolish! You think it out yourself already how the time come when it is all only the decent rightness to me. Long, long have your heart understand me. If I seem brutal a moment ago, what must you seem to yourself—you who for twelve long month’ watch and know my hunger which never murmur—you who let me hold my two

thumb’ in the screw day after day, and never wince!”

She was sobbing; repressedly at first, then with heaving rise and fall that wrenched as if tearing her asunder. He waited, shaking his head, stroking her hair. One of the silver straps across her shoulders had broken. He tried gently to readjust it; gave it up, and brushed with his lips the white flesh it had touched. Unrelenting in its exigence, passion grew compassionate, even chivalrous. He knew his woman. He dealt with no underling of the understanding; no, nor any vampire of mental or temperamental vitality to drain the veins of harried generosity and elide the costs.

His logic had addressed itself to a tested worldliness; to a sophistication unfailing in its candor; to a disillusionment that would, when plumbed to its depth, flinch before no page of his bookkeeping, foisted thus to unequivocal victory. Let her then cry like a child with a broken doll, poor little woman! She was, as she had said, no actress. Confidently he had bided his time and his torture, knowing she was the one in a thousand who, by irresistible law of her being, would be honest with his code, now that he had given her his world. These were not the sobs of that first recoil when too impetuously he had snipped the thread dangling the sword—that fine, revealing recoil, proving her all he had believed her to be. These were the sobs of surrender. He knew his woman. . . .

In his fingers he held the broken silver strap. “Go in there. Get out of this. It make me think of a cuirass,” he said, referring to the straight-girding sheath of her gown, stiff with its silver. “Dry the tear from that blue under the lashes; make yourself pretty in the softest, pinkest, frilliest thing you got. I ring down to Ambroise for the supper while you prink—”

“You didn’t let me know—” she sobbed. “I see it now—but you didn’t let me realize it was *all* you! I thought—you were finding in me a latent talent; I thought, I even prayed I might be helping you—as you were helping me!”

“You did not think at all,” he answered her, “though all the time deep, deep, you understand. You were—*ach*, you forgive me, sweetheart, yes?—just a little glutton of my brain who fatten her ego on the vision of ‘career’ she would fling in the face of that

fellow, that 'boy-husband' not yet divorce', you so often hate and sometime moon about. But my faith do not falter—no, never. I have not miscalculate the hour when the time iss ripe. My mistake iss only how I forget myself for one moment—and that you forgive me, yes? My faith never falter."

SHE heard the waiter in the sitting-room beyond the boudoir clearing, rearranging the table faithful Bunty had laid for the eight members of the cast of "Tosca of the Tenements" and the producer and the author. Author? The lip she was limitlessly rouging curled before her mirror as it hardened. He had spoken the truth. She had never really deceived herself. Bereft of her Svengali she could not have written a parlor dialogue. She stood in the pink peignoir she had donned, with its brodered apple blossoms, and gazed at the photograph on her dresser. From its frame of copper and ebony, a face looked out to her, boyish, fair-haired, with restive lips and debonair eyes; a clear-gazing Icarus, fated to the singeing of waxen wings in the caress of too much sunlight.

"So I even out the score, Ray, boy, husband—just as in my first bitterness I vowed to do. For such as this I gave you up—just for a little ideal of constancy you couldn't quite attain; and now—I even out the score."

When at last she went in to Otto Aronson the waiter had departed. The feast for two was ready: truffles, and grouse and the wine that had been hoarded. Like a courtier, or like the Scarpia of the opera, he drew out the chair for her and bent low, saluting the tips of her fingers. And ever in the back of her brain there buzzed the lines of her own tenement Tosca, as spoken by Gilda Leonardi: "In your own way, what you say iss ze gratitude I pay you—I pay you! Ze debt shall not stand—ze debt shall be wipe' away; an' I tell you zat efery kiss I will give shall be ze malediction; an' I tell you zat efery caress you will take shall be a curse!" . . .

"The thing I cannot make out to me," said Aronson, pouring champagne into long-stemmed tulips of crystal, "is that you never divorce him."

"All things in their time, Otto darling." But the words had an edge to them, a little

rasp. A tinkle, silvery-sardonic, proclaimed the touching of her glass with his own. "Let us drink a toast to—"

Her toast was never to be spoken. The telephone bell jangled with a prolonged, vicious buzzing.

Aronson started from his chair. "Now what is that!" he snarled.

"Better let me answer it, Otto darling," she advised him. "The Balforado is a new hotel, you know, and the management desires to be considered very particular. Who knows what's on their mind?"

"It is outrage! I have arrange'!"

"But I can manage them," she cried aloud, gulping her wine. "I can manage them; and anyhow—we should worry!"

Her face was bloodless beneath the reckless daubing of red she had given it. It gleamed with demoniac satire like a mænad. With hands that were dynamos of nerve voltage she clutched his shoulders, pressing him back into his chair. The whirl of her was a dizziness about him, like vertigo. Ere he could find himself, she had darted across the room and was speaking into the transmitter, the receiver at her ear.

"Mrs. Raynor's apartment—yes?"

"If they raise the objection it is some upstart clerk!" broke in the baffled man with an oath. "I arrange all with the owner himself; I settle the clerk quick enough; I stop up his nose with the too keen smell!"

"This is Mrs. Raynor. Yes?"

Then she went calm. She stood still and rigid, muzzling the transmitter with outspread palm that pressed and pressed, convulsively, too stiff to tremble.

"IT'S himself," she told him in a voice far away as an echo.

"Himself?"

"It's Ray—my husband. He's below; he wants to see me."

"As to that," returned Aronson, suddenly as quiet as herself, "I don't think you need the instruction from me."

A crash, faintly slithering, rounded the composure of his words. His absent grip had relaxed on the long-stemmed glass he had forgotten to set down. It lay in fragments on the plate by his side.

"Ray—my husband—" she repeated in a far-away monotone. "He's below. He wants to see me. . . . He wants to see me. . . ."

It might have been a refrain. Dull lividness, well-nigh purple, crept down his beetling forehead; spread and widened from his open, dilating nostrils.

"What game is this?" he demanded brutally. "Damn—"

"Sh, sh!" she soothed. "It is no game—save yours. I don't know what brings him to me. Were they announcing the Caliph of Bagdad it would not be more incredible—less explicable; but the game is all yours. He will come up—I shall not refuse him—he will find me in my peignoir—at one in the morning—supping alone with you. What more can you ask? Why—it's your ultimate guarantee, Otto Aronson. Whether I bid him enter or send him away—the game's all yours."

"It iss damn funny business—"

"I've been wondering what could be keeping all my supper guests," she was cooing over the telephone—she who had made even *him* skeptical of his power to create of her the actress. "Send Mr. Raynor right up, of course." . . .

She harkened for, and heard, the light rap on the outer door. She saw the indomitable builder of theaters, the Svengalian conjurer of dramas and stars and playwrights, backing toward the farthest wall as if groping for self-effacement, hunching stock-still where the light seemed dimmest. She turned the knob and stood smiling at the man to whom she was still legally married—smiling under her rouge and her incarnadined lips. He might have been the most expected of possible guests.

He stood beyond her threshold, confused, fumbling his greeting like a schoolboy, hesitant before the proffer of her hand. "This is so kind—so very kind of you—Marion. I wasn't asking so much—I thought maybe you might be awake—willing to let me speak to you from the booth downstairs. I didn't expect—so much—"

"You didn't expect so much?"

"I just wanted to tell you—I—I was at your play tonight and—"

"And—and—you dear fussed old thing—you shall tell me. It is sweet of you to want to tell me. You shall even drink a toast to me, if you like."

"Oh, Marion!" he cried, and she winced beneath the thrill of his clean, hard grip. "What a play you have written—what a soul is behind it! I walked miles and miles

about the streets when it was over. I went home and tried to sleep. All no use—I had to come and try to tell you—tonight! I couldn't even wait until tomorrow; it was something too strong for me. You'll have to forgive me—"

She could not free her hand from his tightening clasp as she backed, drawing him into the room.

"Ray, dear—you're leaving the door ajar."

MEETLY apologizing, he released her and went back to close the door and returned with fixed eyes unseeing save as they saw her alone.

"I—I was ready to swear you looked out to me—all but spoke to me—across the footlights. But I told myself I was a deluded fool to imagine that. And then—"

He stopped short. He had perceived for the first time that she was not alone.

"And then!" she prompted.

"Oh, but I do beg your pardon, Marion! What a dub of a butter-in you must take me to be! I didn't dream I'd be intruding—honestly I didn't!"

"But I'm so glad—so glad you came, Ray—so glad you couldn't make yourself wait even until tomorrow. It gives me a chance to make two old friends acquainted—gives me a chance to introduce you to the man whose genius and devotion and heroic, unfailing patience were behind every cheer they gave me tonight. And all this power, Ray, he has won through suffering, through fine, persistent struggle, through endless self-mastery and endurance; none of it has come to him easily, Ray—as all our good things used to come to us. Mr. Aronson, meet Mr. Raynor—an old friend of mine—once upon a time I even happened to be married to him."

They acknowledged each other's presence without moving nearer across the reaches of the room.

"I did see you in the audience, Ray. I felt quite sure. And I saw the look on your face—a different look; I haven't forgotten how you used to look. You're changed somehow, Ray. If there's something on your mind, tell me, dear—tell me just as you used to. Mr. Aronson won't mind. He can step into my boudoir, or the bedroom beyond it—he can shut the door behind him and you'll tell me what brought you. It must be something very

important. You used to say—at first—that I undid all the tangles. Try me now. Maybe I haven't lost the skill!"

In some strange way Aronson was as if effaced from the scene. Across three paces of shaded lights his identity receded as if to an *n*th degree of infinitude. His alert self-consciousness caught the dimming of his personality, giving him the feeling that his own existence might be questioned. Reaction ceased within him. He might have been a prop.

And as a prop the intruder plainly regarded him. Wistfully the young man's eyes were filled with his wife, and the room had for him neither light nor shadow, nor human presence save her.

"God grant that I *have* changed a little, Marion. Anyhow I'm doing now what I've tried to find strength to do all these months—ever since you poured your little all into the great vat of the law, weighing down the scales of justice until you saved me from— Oh, don't try to say all that was impossible or beyond you—I know what I know!"

"But all I could do was so little, Ray. And all the time, and to the end, you turned from me—"

"I turned from you, yes—because I couldn't find strength to admit to you, as man to man, that for all my technical innocence, I had been a more unmitigated cad, a more fundamental scoundrel, than either my ruined wife or ruined family could ever, or can ever, guess—for which I suppose that I ought to be thanking our Maker all my days. You're all just built that way. That is what you've given me courage at last to do—this night—without waiting for any more morrows. When I saw your play tonight—and your success—and knew so well, knowing the world as I do, what it must cost you in the end—what no doubt it has cost you already—I—I made the final wrestle—I threw down pride and cowardice. Cad, scoundrel, general rotter, all these I've been, Marion—but tonight you've given me strength to tell you that you did something more than just save my carcass from the road up the river; you've saved something in me that makes it possible for me to come in this way and tell you all this—before this man—"

He had stood before her erect as a

soldier who faces his tribunal, scorning evasion in all his admissions. Now, however, his head dropped. He fumbled with his hat.

"That—I guess—is about all I can say now, Marion. It isn't all that I meant to say nor the way I hoped to say it, but I guess—it'll have to do, except that—there hasn't been a moment for a year past when I wouldn't have given ten of my worthless lives trying to win you back; only I knew that was preposterous. For an instant just now I altogether forgot—I'm nothing but a presumptuous intruder. Well—with so much to forgive—maybe you'll forgive me that, too. That's all. God bless you, Marion. Good-by."

He was hurrying toward the door with drooping shoulders and head still bowed.

"RAY!" She was trying to call him back, but her throat was palsied and the cry was soundless. Tottering where she stood, she made a single gesture weakly mute.

"One moment, young man!" It had been an unconscious gesture, but Aronson, had seen it—Otto Aronson, producer of plays, Svengalian conjurer of drama. "One moment, young man! You go not away like that until I, too, speak!"

The intruder turned ruggedly in the area-way. He stood waiting, his humility touched with defiance.

"Not once do your so great sentimentality move me," Aronson began. "Not once do you convince me you are any better than you say you are or than I have know' you are—for I have know' more facts about you than she should ever know. You deserve nothing, nothing at all, not any more now than all the time before—"

"Freely granting the accuracy of all that, sir, it is not your verdict that interests me—"

"But this woman—"

"And since you insist on sharing what concerns the two of us alone, I'll turn bromidic—you, the dramatist, would no doubt call it that!—and make it the three of us. When Marion has divorced me, as of course she duly will, you, sir, will marry her. I tell you, *that you will do*—unless she herself forbids it, having had by that time enough of you."

"But this woman"—Aronson went on

without perceptible consciousness of interruption—"she deserve' anything in the world she want—because always she have the justice to be brave before the cost. She deserve' anything she want—and more than the hope of God or heaven she want you. I have see' that—though I try, and she try, not to think of it. For the first time in all our year we are tonight alone. For the first time I, who have believe' she is the woman of the world, find she is but the child—yet she was ready to pay. I do not believe at the very last I would have make her pay—clearer and clearer I have see'! And then—you come. . . . I give her back to you, the same unsullied child you once called the wife. Now I go. It will be you who stay."

From the settee he had gathered up the fur-lined coat he had doffed, and the formal hat. Bowing low over Mrs. Raynor's hand, a courtier with no touch of the Scarpia, he backed from the presence of the playwright whose success he had assured; who could never have written a seminary charade unaided. With a nod, formal as the hat he carried, he passed the young husband in the close quarters of the area-way, and pulled the door ajar, pausing for his final delivery:

"It is supper for two on the table," he said, "and wine I have hoard for the great joy of some hour yet to be. But you, young man—you practise a little before you go, with the key in this Yale lock. It iss a very hard latch-string to undo."

The August Complete Novel

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August *EVERYBODY'S*

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Saving Danny Deever

Although the Syndicate Went Bankrupt, It Did Restore the Jockey's Courage. A Racing Story with a Surprise

By Sam Carson

Illustration by Courtney Allen

THE hungry tide of jockeys, trainers and stablemen invading Mother Crit's dining-room brought up at the whiplike voice which came from the kitchen door.

"Whoa! Don't try to beat the barrier, you selling-platers. Line up like stake horses."

Thirty strong, they paused meekly behind sturdy chairs, a famished, contrasting group, young and old. Noses, sharp ones, crooked ones, bulbous ones, sniffed at steaming roasts, potatoes and biscuits.

Hands on hips, jaw outthrust, Mother Crit the martinet surveyed her charges scornfully. There was a menacing earnestness in her search for the disobedient. Mother Crit weighed one hundred and seventy pounds; and she carried a wicked punch in either hand. Once she had proved it—in the crowded dining-room—and outside as well. Consequently she was respected.

Memphis Red, freckled and as persistent as original sin, slid his chair to one side; it was neatly done, but not deftly enough to escape the monitor.

"Second table for you, Memphis," she called. "Tried to come through on the rail."

She glanced down the silent rows. "Barrier's up," she said. "Go!"

Such was the manner in which Mother Crittenden managed her eating-place three hops and a skip from Churchill Downs track on the southern edge of Louisville. The onslaught on her provender justified her table discipline; Mother Crit believed in fair play. That policy meant forcing the more avid of her customers to give the rest an even break. Satisfied now that her two

hefty waitresses were providing fresh platters to replace those emptied with amazing speed, Mother Crit assumed her post at the table beside the door. It was a one-way entrance and exit, with the proprietress on guard, cigar box open, ready for the flood of silver change. There was no credit in Mother Crit's place of business. Fifteen years of aggressive widowhood had quite disillusioned her in the matter of trust. Mother Crit, long before, had adopted the pay-as-you-leave method.

At the second table, patronized chiefly by older men, Memphis Red ate quietly, too quietly to suit Mother Crit. She did not underestimate the craft lurking beneath the tout's sorrel thatch. Wherefore, when the youth slid a bulky sandwich into his coat pocket, Mother Crit nodded with satisfaction.

She said nothing as Memphis Red handed over fifty cents. It went into the cigar box and the tout fidgeted uneasily. "Say," he demanded at last, "where's my two-jit drag?"

"Forty cents for supper," Mother Crit replied grimly, "ten cents for the sandwich you put in your right coat pocket. Any kick?"

"Aw—say! That's for a new kid; from my home town—busted. Didn't think you'd care. He ain't well. And he's flat broke. Honest!"

Mother Crit gazed at Memphis Red until the youth realized the futility of lying.

"I'll give it to you straight," he confessed. "Old Polka Dot Netter asked me to swipe him a sandwich. I didn't get away with it."

"Polka Dot Netter," she informed him, "has been owing me five dollars for the last six years. He's about the sorriest thing

that ever lit on a Kentucky track. Crippled—humph! What's wrong now—betting all his sucker money?"

"He ain't touting," Memphis Red explained; "he can't find any suckers. And honest, Mother Crit, he's plumb ashy-looking; as thin as a rail. Reckon he's up against it—bad."

"Humph!" Mother Crit sniffed, then considered thoughtfully.

Memphis Red brightened. "He ain't had a square meal for so long he'd faint at your table."

"Allie!" Mother Crit called suddenly. "Fix up a basket; some of the roast, some biscuits and coffee."

She turned to the tout. "Here's your thin dime. Next time you try to give me the slip, out you go. Bring that basket back before eight o'clock, too, or I'll know the reason why."

But Memphis Red was not finished yet. He bit into a black tobacco plug and grinned at Polka Dot Netter's benefactress. "Heard from Danny lately?"

Mother Crit melted, a smile spreading over her broad face. Danny Crittenden was her son, a slim, mouse-mannered boy of seventeen whose white face and even features caused so many, who remembered Daniel Crittenden, to wonder from what source the boy had obtained the right to be thin and handsome. It was strange, for the late Daniel, before a train wreck had ended his alcoholic existence, had been considered about the ugliest man in Kentucky.

"Danny, bless his heart," Mother Crit said, "is apprentice for the Simon Stables up at Pimlico. He's not going to ride here. Comes to Latonia in July."

"Won any races?" demanded the practical Memphis Red.

"Second in a stake race last week," she boasted. "He'll be winning his spurs any time now. But you just wait—until you see my Danny boy come riding home first in the Derby. Then you'll be proud you was a friend of Mother Crit."

"Hot dog!" Memphis Red commented. "Danny rides in the Derby and I'm hanging on the fence, with a ticket in my hand, rooting for him."

Mother Crit chuckled, eyes soft. And Memphis Red, with a side glance at the door, saw escape an easy matter. Now was his chance. There had been an evil desire

in his mind for months, a curiosity to know just what Mother Crit would do if he tickled her under the ribs. Hooking the basket under his left elbow, he gave the proprietress a dig with his right hand, then darted out.

In his haste the tout slipped to the floor. And that mishap was a disguised blessing. A handy broom, in motion before Mother Crit had completed an outraged yell, struck the screen door just where Memphis Red's unwashed neck should have been. Grabbing for the basket, the youth gained his feet and demonstrated an ability to run.

"HEY, Polka Dot!" Memphis Red shouted at the entrance of Stable G. "You big bum! Where are you?"

From the dark interior a dismal voice answered, "Do any good?"

"Snap out of it and put on your nose bag. Put over a long shot with Mother Crit. Copped a basketful."

A prolonged sigh, of anticipation and relief, drifted out from the deserted interior. Then came a preliminary rustle, a scuffling of feet, and Polka Dot Netter materialized. He was a lean, whiskered somebody—a very Lazarus of the stables. Beady eyes and a spade nose alone stood out from the riot of hair and beard encircling his face. Altogether, Polka Dot was an unholy sight. He glanced into the basket, sniffed earnestly.

"Caught me snitching a sandwich right off the reel," Memphis explained. "But I can't put this over every day. And I ain't putting out no jack—can't. Got any silver at all?"

"That six bits you lent me," Polka Dot answered between bites.

"Don't waste it on shellac," Memphis Red advised. "Hard times are here. Wouldn't have been easy if Mother Crit hadn't loosened up. Got next to her about her kid—Danny."

Polka Dot chuckled. "There's an old gag about the lioness and her whelp, Memphis. Danny's a plumb sorry little whelp. Can't help it, either. Riding for Ed Simon, ain't he?"

"Uh-huh. Old lady's going on—figuring the kid would ride in the Derby next spring."

Lights along the narrow street between stables flared up. Polka Dot gazed at a generous slice of the roast with sorrow.

"Can't make it," he mourned. "Guess I'll put it away till morning. Nope, Memphis. Danny won't ride in the Derby next May. Saw him lose a race at Bowie a few weeks ago. Something wrong. Reckon he's what you'd call possessed of a spineless mentality."

Memphis Red puckered his lips, whistled noiselessly. "Sometimes," he observed, "you talk like an educated man."

"Sometimes," Polka Dot replied cryptically, "I forget and think like one. But you can't graft a booze diet onto a milk-fed youngster and raise prize fruit. I'm headed for the poorhouse."

Memphis Red studied the frail man with bleary eyes for several moments, hoping for a revelation. But none came. Polka Dot was his old self: ragged, dirty, wretched—kicked from track to track; traveling, the Lord alone knew how.

"Well," Memphis Red announced, "I'm going up to Latonia after Saturday. Got a job peddling selections for the Oriole."

"Death Valley," Polka Dot mused. "A hard name for as pretty track as Latonia. Reckon I'll show up, too. Better tie up as stableman with some outfit." He sighed. "But I hate to work—with all the suckers loose."

But Polka Dot Netter visited Latonia without having to go to work; and Memphis Red failed to clear Louisville without Mother Crit making up for the tickled rib. And in the end, both came to know Danny, son of Mother Crit, far more intimately than either dreamed.

It came about this way. Polka Dot started across Central Street, adjoining the track, one afternoon just as the uptown flood of automobiles began to flow away from the course. Out of the jam shot a gray roadster bearing a foreign license. Intending to duck, Polka Dot slipped. The machine's bumper barely grazed him; but Polka Dot's mind worked swiftly. He lay quite motionless, face downward.

Fifteen minutes later, in a frame cottage near the accident scene, Polka Dot decided to open his eyes; during that period a physician had been summoned, the motorist had given a fairly comprehensive story of his life, and the victim was growing tired of his rôle. He gazed at the elderly driver with half-closed eyes. "What—hit me?" he groaned.

In the end Polka Dot limped out to the street with a fifty-dollar bill in his pocket, while the driver was eminently satisfied at having obtained Polka Dot's signature to a certain paper, hastily drawn up.

Polka Dot neglected to relate his good fortune that night as Memphis Red brought by a moldy ham sandwich and two apples. "What you tipping tomorrow?" he inquired of his benefactor.

"Dorgan. He's safe—not more than even money and the best jockey at the Downs in the saddle."

"Cinch bet," Polka Dot agreed. "But ain't you got no long-shot chances? Heard anything around the stables lately?"

"Well"—Memphis Red considered—"the Meadows crowd's kinda like oysters since Hermitage was entered in the fifth tomorrow. Colt's been working good and is in with a feather on his back. Good odds if you happen to have a spare twenty or fifty laying around."

"Um!" Polka Dot reflected. "I find a stray fifty and we split on Hermitage."

HERMITAGE in the fifth race it was, with the sweet odds of eighteen to one in the paris mutuels. And Polka Dot, hands trembling, went up to the fifty-dollar window and cashed his ticket. Then he hunted up Memphis Red.

It required a half-hour for Polka Dot to explain. And then the tout seemed too dazed to offer adequate comment. Instead, he squared off and stared as if Polka Dot were a mortal from another world. The other was counting off bills, fifties and twenties and tens.

"I'm liberal with my tips," Polka Dot observed. "Four hundred—twenty—fifty. Take it—it's yours. Now where do we go to buy some clothes? After that, I'm going right into Mother Crit's place and eat—eat twice if I want to."

Which explains the commotion when Polka Dot, clad in ill-fitting serge and wide-brimmed hat, sauntered into Mother Crit's dining-room, swinging an enormous cane on his arm. His hair had been trimmed, but the beard was still of the variety calculated to bring tears to a Bolshevik's eyes.

Mother Crit left her table; and for once in her heroic life she was silenced. Not so with the remainder; seldom had the winning jockey of a great race received the

ovation tendered Polka Dot. In the end he was bombarded with biscuits until Mother Crit intervened. Biscuits, after all, were biscuits. The diversion brought her back to her practical self.

"I don't know where you found the layout," she said; "but it's pay in advance, Polka Dot. And as for you"—glaring at Memphis Red—"I'll have a word to say. You're not going—"

Strange what effect color has on human nature. The color of the bill Polka Dot was shaking beneath Mother Crit's nose was yellow. "That's sufficient, I believe, madam," Polka Dot observed with dignity, "to settle any back pay of mine. Likewise to guarantee my little friend the right to sit at your table."

"You said a mouthful," Mother Crit replied, eyes still on the bill. "Boys," she called to the room, "Polka Dot's found an oil well—or something. I didn't know there was that much money in Louisville."

It was after the last wondering diner had departed reluctantly, with many backward glances at Polka Dot and Memphis Red, that Mother Crit came over to them. She was rather serious; and a letter was crumpled in her hand.

"I'm going to ask the same of you two," she said, "as the rest of my boys. You're going to Latonia, of course. I"—she was positively embarrassed in her manner—"I want everybody to keep an eye out for my Danny boy. He's young to be looking out for himself. And—I can tell—from his letter, that something is wrong. All I ask—if you find what it is—just drop me a line. If any low-down rat of a jockey—or Ed Simon himself—is bluffing my Danny I'll break their necks."

Polka Dot promised, of course. Likewise Memphis Red. And him, Mother Crit suddenly gathered up and bent across her ample knee.

"There!" she puffed. "That's what you get for pestering an old woman whose heart is none too good. Good luck to both of you. And here's your change, Polka Dot."

Two cavaliers hung over the rail on opening day at Latonia—knights of the stable clan—conscious of their magnificence. Across the landscaped infield seven thoroughbreds milled at the six-furlong starting-barrier. Polka Dot Netter hummed softly, a ten-dollar ticket in his hand. Memphis

Red, a prodigious tobacco quid swelling one side of his face, trusted his eyes alone to catch the byplay incident to sending away the troublesome field of two-year-olds.

"Mother Crit's kid is on Simonette," he observed; "third from the rail. Breaks fast at all and he can show his heels to the other Simon entry.—Burgoo. Bennie Moran's sure got the fence this time—number twelve. And his mount's raising Cain."

"I'm betting on the entry, of course," Polka Dot announced. "All the same, I'll lay even money it's Moran who leads down the stretch. He's foxy."

"We'll know blamed quick," Memphis Red retorted. "They're off."

DANNY was in the lead with the quick-breaking Simonette. And he held it down the back stretch, into the turn and around the curving track until they reached the straightaway.

The swift half-snarl of the close-packed throng beside the rail told of a change in fortune. Burgoo, piloted around the two thoroughbreds just behind Simonette, came like a house afire, Moran's whip flashing.

Polka Dot and Memphis Red saw the hopeless resignation in Danny's face as Moran charged by. There was something very closely related to terror in the youth's white countenance as Simonette passed the judges—second.

"Simon's entry won," Polka Dot remarked. "But Simon lost. Simonette's his own horse. Woman up in Maryland owns Burgoo. Ed Simon's training the colt."

Memphis Red whistled softly. "Heard something like that before. Burgoo's registered in his name, though. Mother Crit's boy sure is in for hard times. He didn't have any excuse."

"None," Polka Dot replied, "that you know of. Neither did Danny Deever. But they hung him all the same."

"Who the heck was Danny Deever?"

"A British soldier who drank bitter beer, perforated some of his comrades out in India and faced a genteel hanging. In the morning, too."

"Danny Crit's got an Indian sign hung on him," Memphis Red said irrelevantly. "And I got a hunch I know who hung it."

"I always figured somebody had an Indian sign on Danny Deever too," Polka Dot mused.

"Aw, forget your Danny Deevers!" Memphis Red advised. "Wowie! Lookit the price on the mutuel board. Two to one on a cinch bet."

And so it was—two to one—the two-thousand purse for the winner going to Burgoo, which meant a gambler's wife up in Maryland. Ed Simon, squat and extremely red-faced for the time, eyed Danny as he dismounted. He was silent, chiefly because there were so many things to say that his natural indignation was choked. Simonette was the owner's most beloved possession. It never occurred to him that Moran could share the blame. Bennie was a finished rider, brainy and successful. No, Simon placed the blame upon Danny's slim shoulders. And he placed it emphatically a half-hour later over at the stable.

Danny took the tongue-lashing as he always did, in shamefaced silence. He was indicted for not using his whip; and of that he was guilty. Quite evidently, when Burgoo had settled the challenge of other contenders, Danny had suffered his running mate to go ahead, without a battle.

"Ought to let you go—give you your contract," Simon stormed. "Of all the sorry riding I ever saw, yours was the rottenest exhibition. Gets so it's a gamble, picking up apprentices. And you were pretty fair eight months ago."

"I—thought Bennie was aiming to hold Burgoo to second place," Danny explained. "But he kept on coming."

"Coming!" Simon roared. "You bet he kept on coming. Ain't Simonette a good enough colt to beat him? Tell me! You know I'm right. Reckon I'd better let you go," he reflected. "You're too hopeless. But I'll give you a fair chance. Not a word why I'm canning you."

"You mean," Danny asked, bewildered, "that I'm fired—c-can't ride for you again?"

"Good guess," Simon affirmed, biting at a cigar. "You'll get your check tomorrow. I'll send it over by Bennie." And with that he walked away. It was better that he did; for the forlorn apprentice stumbled across the street and gave way to the woe that engulfed him.

POLKA DOT NETTER hummed softly as he raked his beard thoughtfully with a fine-toothed comb. His room was an outside one in a rather pretentious

boarding-house miles from Latonia track. A street light flashing into action for its night of service caused the roomer to switch on the chandelier cluster. Another suit, of better cut than the blue serge, lay across the bed, with the wide-brimmed hat and heavy cane, testimony of Polka Dot's success at the track. He was considering, rather seriously, having his evening meal sent him. While he was debating the subject, Memphis Red burst into the room.

"Got a killing on tomorrow—in the fourth," he announced. "Bennie Moran's on Legume. He'll be favorite. The public will set the works in on the horse. And when they do, that Morton kid will snatch King's Counselor out of the field and win by a nose."

"Mighty close finish," Polka Dot observed. "Moran in on the deal?"

"It's not a frame-up," Memphis Red denied. "Honest! Morton's got it in for Bennie. And King's Counselor's been pointed for a killing the last six weeks. He goes tomorrow."

"By a nose," Polka Dot repeated.

"That's Morton's promise. But a nose is as good as three lengths—if they pay off."

"This Morton boy is an apprentice," Polka Dot reflected. "No older than our young Danny Deever. Spunky, though. Heard about Ed Simon firing Danny?"

"How in the world do you get inside dope?" Memphis Red demanded. "I have to dig like everything for my information."

"Out of the air," Polka Dot explained, lifting up his suit to admire before getting into it. "Out of the air. Looks like somebody'll have to write Mother Crit."

Now it happened that King's Counselor did everything promised; Morton rode the four-year-old gelding to victory, rode him triumphantly to a finish which sent thousands wild. And he outgamed Moran to the wire by a nose.

There was talk of an enraged Bennie Moran who threatened to do bodily violence to young Morton; and there was further gossip concerning Morton's invitation to fight it out with gloves in a deserted stable. At least there wasn't any fight. And Morton's prosperity dated from that race. But all of this had little interest for the two cavaliers of fortune; Polka Dot and Memphis Red were affluent, magnificent in their exalted estate. They talked grandly

of buying automobiles, of purchasing race horses. And they did invest in extensive wardrobes. Of evenings they began to journey over to Cincinnati and order expensive dinners in lordly style.

It was one of these trips that brought the pair into contact with Danny Crit. The youth had not been seen about the track for a week. Polka Dot had engaged a taxi and stopped it a block from Fountain Square. Dusk was settling and a group of newsboys, of varying size, scented a possible customer.

A slim, overalled youth reached them first, paper outstretched, when a freckled urchin, much smaller, elbowed his way in front. Polka Dot bought the paper without paying especial attention to the contenders. It was Memphis Red who whistled.

"For the love o' Mike! Polka Dot! That's Danny Crit selling papers—the one that snipe-nosed kid bluffed down."

"Wait a minute, driver," Polka Dot ordered. "We're going back to the Kentucky side. Danny!" he called. "Come here."

He looked the forlorn youth over, stroking his beard thoughtfully. "Left the racing game flat on its back," he mused, "just as soon as Ed Simon gave you the gate. What's the idea?"

Danny Crit gazed at his papers, abashed as his business rivals began to come up. "Wasn't anything else to do," he mumbled. "Nobody wanted me."

"Hop in," Memphis Red directed. "Let's get away from this gang."

Two hours later the two cavaliers had the story of Danny's downfall, and Mother Crit's only son had a full stomach and had gone to sleep in Memphis Red's bed.

"Kicked like a steer on having us write to the old lady," Polka Dot remarked. "Lioness and the whelp. Reckon we've got to figure this out ourselves."

"He's been bluffed," Memphis Red asserted, "bluffed by the worst bully who ever sat in the pilot house."

"Yes," Polka Dot affirmed, "Bennie Moran's that type. Going back of what Danny told us, it stacks up like this: Bennie started bullying the kid just for sport. And Danny would buck him just enough to make it interesting. Ed Simon's a square-head. Never could see anything farther than his nose. What happened is

that Moran, every time Simon had two horses in a race, would force Danny to stay behind. That was all right, if Simon intended for Danny to set the early pace. But when it came to the days Simon wasn't racing, and he let the kids free-lance, why, Moran did wrong. He still kept Danny from winning a race. It sort of got under my skin when the boy told how Moran rubbed dirt in his face for giving him a stretch duel one day. He held the Indian sign on young Crit, all right. And if something ain't done, it'll be every bit as bad as Danny Deever. But what?"

"What?" Memphis Red repeated, helping himself to an enormous chew from a handy plug. "I can lick Bennie Moran in one round, gloves or no gloves. What about that? An Indian sign on Bennie."

The older man shook his head. "Not so good. It would stop Moran. But what of Danny? He's our problem. And I'm not an expert in psychology."

"Cut out the dictionary stuff," Memphis yawned. "Personally, I'd like to make Mother Crit come up here. A meeting between her and Bennie would draw big admission. You'd have to handicap her some, though," he reflected; "say tie her left hand behind her."

"DANNY'S cowed," Polka Dot said. "Kid-like, he thought he was man enough to keep his troubles to himself. I'll think over an idea tonight."

"So will I," Memphis Red responded, "—one with a left upper-cut and a sharp-nosed jockey named Bennie Moran at the receiving end. So long."

But Polka Dot Netter had no idea the next morning. In truth, he would have lost interest in the affair if Danny hadn't seemed so woebegone. Mother Crit's son was so spiritless that Memphis Red surveyed his breakfast guest with disgust.

"Ain't you got any jack saved up at all?"

Danny shook his head. "Mr. Simon paid me by the month. I didn't win a race. So I didn't get any price a ride—just forty a month and board."

"He's a big-hearted guy," Memphis Red reflected, "—throws away money on riders just like that."

"And Bennie's holding my last check," Danny ventured, "'cause I borrowed some money up in Maryland."



There was a sudden stumble, Simonette going down, Danny shooting forward into space. And nobody but the placing stewards saw Tipstaff sweep by first, Blue Miss second.

"How much?" Memphis Red inquired.

"Twelve dollars—in all. I—wanted to play big—and send it home."

Memphis Red arose from the table, gazed speculatively at Danny, then crossed to Polka Dot. "Lay off this game for a while," he whispered. "I'm gonna try my hand. Drop around to the back side of the old stables in about an hour—our old hangout. You'll get some action for your trouble."

Danny followed Memphis Red to the deserted space behind the stable buildings. He was amazed when the glorified tout, restocking his tobacco cud, plunged into a torrent of abuse which concerned the Crittenden family as an entirety. Memphis Red was an artist in this particular line; and Danny's pale face became whiter as the tout began to include Mother Crit.

"The mole-faced old rip!" Memphis Red elaborated. "No better than a—"

One thing Memphis Red's idea had not included; and that was to swallow his cud. But he did, rather abruptly. The reason therefor was Danny Crit's right, delivered with all the insane fury his tiny body could develop. Danny, praying inwardly for sudden death, quite forgot himself after he had launched his attack. He fought without words, conscious only that he craved, above all earthly things, to ruin that tobacco-stained mouth that had delivered such a flow of undeserved abuse. It was a weird struggle, one quite worthy of an audience. But even Polka Dot missed it. A chance meeting with a friend across the infield had resulted in pertinent information.

Fifteen minutes afterward the bearded old knight of the turf discovered Memphis Red, rather disheveled, bathing a purpling eye beneath an open hydrant. Squatting on the ground, Danny Crit was performing a similar function.

"What I want—to know," Danny puffed, "is why—if you took back all you said, why you said it at all."

Memphis Red didn't answer at first; he was aware that he had lost his tobacco plug. Presently he found it, dust-covered and frayed. "Danny," he announced, "I can lick Bennie Moran without half trying. Once I held a draw with the featherweight champ of the South. Ten rounds, too. Now take you—Danny Crit. You're paperweight champ of Death Valley. You just won that title, by turning yourself into a

cyclone. Suppose," he added impressively, "I'd have been Bennie Moran."

Danny didn't answer. But he was extremely thoughtful.

"I was just showing you up, Danny. You're a sap for letting Bennie get away with a rotten brand of bluff. Me—I'm gonna train you."

Polka Dot emerged from his hiding-place behind the stable door. "Leave him to me," he ordered. "Your idea was good, but it don't take in enough territory. Danny," he asked, "did you know Ed Simon's just sold Simonette?"

Neither did Memphis Red. And he said so forcefully.

"Major Butler paid out twenty thousand for the colt," Polka Dot continued. "And the same man who told me that news allowed there was an opening over there for an apprentice rider, at least for workouts."

Danny came to life. Rubbing his swollen eye thoughtfully, he looked at Memphis Red, grinned. "After I hit up Major Butler for that job, want to learn me some—more swings?"

Memphis shook his head. "Not swings, Danny. You've got enough of them. Just how to protect yourself, that's all. But get back in time for supper."

"There goes a kid after a job that's certain," Polka Dot observed. "Fought all right, did he? Figured that was the stunt you were up to."

"I'll say he did," Memphis Red agreed. "How come you know that job's certain?"

"Major Butler was the man who told me about Simonette," came the reply. "He's already promised to hire Danny. Told him the kid was plumb foolish about the colt."

SIMONETTE was brown, sixteen hands high and viewed the world through eyes set wide apart. The business of racing was every bit as great an adventure to him as to Danny. Relatively, they were at the same stage; on the threshold, as it were. Simonette liked to run. He was fond of lump sugar and apples, like any other normal colt. And he appreciated sympathetic treatment. Consequently Danny was a prime favorite. There was something in the shy youth's manner that spoke of sincerity. They were good friends, an item which rated high with Major Butler. The owner was a newcomer in the racing-game, quiet,

reticent. But he loved horses; therefore, understood them. He knew little of Mother Crit, cared less. But there had been long talks between Polka Dot Netter and Major Butler, conducted at infrequent intervals, on subjects which would have amazed Memphis Red, had he known. Philosophers hardly ever agree on their respective beliefs; but they simply must thresh out their views. Polka Dot and the major didn't agree, but they got along famously, considering a three weeks' acquaintance.

So it came about that Polka Dot worked out his idea and transmitted certain portions to Memphis Red. In accord, Memphis undertook to carry out his part of Polka Dot's strategy. He waited outside jockey quarters late one afternoon until Bennie Moran had dressed. And as the sharp-featured rider appeared, Memphis Red spoke.

"Got some news, Bennie—important."

Bennie's shrewd eyes surveyed the caller. "I got an agent—Spike Dugan—if it's—business."

"This ain't none of Spike Dugan's business," Memphis Red explained. "I'm just telling you Danny Crit's training to spoil that ugly face of yours; that's all, except I'm doing the training."

Bennie Moran's eyes narrowed. "Want a knife stuck between your ribs? Or get chased off the track for life?"

"No—neither," Memphis Red considered. "But I ain't going to get either," he explained. "First place, you ain't got nerve enough to use a knife. Second, you ain't got pull enough to have me chased. How d'you like that."

"I'll show you, first time I run into that pie-faced kid."

"You touch him," Memphis Red warned, "before he's ready, and I'll make hash out of your mug—or Spike Dugan either. And I'll match pull against Ed Simon's, too—through Major Butler. How's that?"

It was good, but Bennie Moran didn't say so.

"Also," Memphis Red added, "there's twenty-eight bones coming to Danny—his last pay check minus the twelve he owes you. When you coming across?"

"Ain't got it now," the jockey said, face sullen.

"Make it your business to get it—blamed quick," Memphis Red advised. "You put

the Indian sign on the kid. Rode him hard because you were afraid he's liable to make good. I'm hep. Well, you're gonna get paid back—with interest. Think about that for a while."

Polka Dot wasn't so certain of an easy victory when he heard the details. "Major Butler aims to send his colt in the Junior Stakes Wednesday week," he said. "Simonette won't have but a hundred and ten pounds to shoulder. So Danny gets the right to ride. It's his chance. Ed Simon's bought that classy filly from up east—Blue Miss. He'll enter her, sure, with Bennie Moran in the saddle. Now there's going to be one thing on Bennie's mind, with what we've spilled, and that's Danny Crit. Sorry we started things right now, but it's too late to back out. Put your gloves on with Danny in the morning, where everybody can see you."

The exhibition attracted scores, noisy and critical of Danny's methods. The apprentice, in the manner of beginners, forgot everything but a desire to land with his gloves, a procedure which left body and face exposed. Memphis, with the soul of an artist, tapped Danny's face so often that he resorted to taunts to spur the rider. And presently he had the son of Mother Crit fighting in earnest, whereupon Memphis Red ceased talking and became quite concentrated concerning the business at hand. In the end, puffing from a strenuous fifteen minutes, Memphis fell into a clinch. "That's enough for today," he whispered.

OVER in a corner, behind the row of spectators, Memphis Red had seen Bennie Moran's sulky face. The bout over, Bennie vanished quickly. But a half-hour later, a messenger brought over an envelope for Memphis. It contained twenty-eight dollars.

"Got him on the run," Memphis Red exulted to Polka Dot.

"Maybe," was the reply. "But I doubt it. He wants to call it quits—with you."

"And leave Danny in the discard," the other reflected. "Danny Crit ain't more'n half started yet. Oh, well—"

In spite of efforts to keep Danny away from Bennie Moran, the pair did meet one bright morning with the Junior Stakes right at hand. Danny had been sent out with Simonette for a six-furlong-run workout,

lead in the saddle pocket, much more than the weight the colt was to carry in the race. They were clipping along at an excellent speed, when Danny heard the rataplan of hoofs from a hard-ridden thoroughbred. Glancing beneath his elbow, he recognized Bennie Moran on Blue Miss.

"Get that Simon discard off the track," Moran shouted. "This is what I'm going to ride by the judges first in the Junior."

Danny never answered. Instead he leaned forward, gave his wrists another wrap. "Don't know what Major Butler will say," he reflected, "but here goes."

That was the reason clockers and rail-birds dropped their listless attitudes and sprang to the track along the back stretch. Here was a contest, something rare in the morning—two superb two-year-olds, racing neck and neck; and a score of sharp-eyed watchers knew Simonette was running under added weight.

Blue Miss moved up, until her head showed in the lead. Bennie glanced back, scowling now. He couldn't shake off the steady Simonette. Danny, heart pounding, realized that fact. "I've got ten pounds more," he called. "And you can't beat us. Bennie," he shrilled, "I'm going to beat you day after tomorrow—in the race—and then with my fists."

With that he pulled up the colt, after a hard fight. Simonette wanted to go on. But Danny's face wore a smile as Blue Miss shot up the back stretch.

THERE was a conference in Polka Dot's room Tuesday night. Danny was there, and Memphis Red was counting his resources, a crumpled wad of bills.

"We got four hundred and eighty dollars," he announced. "Hold out eighty for board and lodging, and we shoot the works on Danny's horse. Say!" he proposed. "We'll have a big celebration—back in Louisville—a big dinner at Mother Crit's. Meeting's over Saturday. We'll drop back down there Sunday."

Polka Dot stroked his beard. "Suits me. About this betting. Better call it a syndicate, with Danny getting an even break. Four hundred bet through the mutuels tomorrow won't affect the odds. There'll be a large crowd out. And Blue Miss, and Tipstaff, that Eastern entry, will be favorites. Yep. We'll call it a syndicate,

split three ways, Danny's part for his ride on Simonette."

"Maybe," Danny put in, awed, "Simonette will be good for the Derby in May."

"Maybe!" Polka Dot echoed. "The colt's good enough now. Better spend the night over here, Danny. I'll roust you up early enough to go over to the stables. Memphis, leave our roll here and give Danny your room."

A half-hour later Memphis Red stepped out into a starless night. Heat lightning was visible in the east. He paid little attention to an automobile which started up suddenly down the street, and which seemed to have difficulty in getting out of low gear. A block and Polka Dot's partner started to cross the street. Ten feet from the curbing and the machine, nearly upon him now, stopped quickly. He never had a chance with the four men who charged.

WHEN a person relies upon another as implicitly as Danny Crit did in the case of Memphis Red, the loss of that person is disastrous. Danny felt his anchor dragging. Held prisoner at jockey quarters from a half-hour past noon, he began to yield to his old fears. Memphis Red had vanished. Polka Dot had shown his concern that morning. And Bennie Moran, who had two other rides before the running of the Junior Stakes, had a sort of contemptuous grin which spelled knowledge. Danny reviewed his promise of riding Simonette to victory, of administering a thrashing to Bennie, and his soul was filled with panic. Memphis Red, his mainstay, was gone. Danny felt ill, shaken. He lowered his eyes, just before going to the paddock, when Bennie, still grinning, looked his way.

Danny was the last to file downstairs, his eyes filled. "Why ain't I got the nerve?" he half sobbed. "I'm—scared."

He was scared, too. Major Butler, dignified and calm as usual, noted his rider's tension. "Get everything off your mind, son," he advised, "except to shoot Simonette out in front and stay there. Don't take a chance. Get out in front."

"Yessir," Danny replied apathetically, then gasped. He had a perfect right to. For Mother Crit, clad in a little-used tailored suit and bedraggled hat, was staring at him from the rear of the paddock crowd. Her lips moved slightly, voice unheard, of

course, in the general buzz of conversation. But Danny understood. He had seen that face, grim and determined, before, once when she had stood a mob off—a mob thirsting to get at a helpless, wounded derelict, wounded in body and crippled in mind. “Danny boy,” she had called him many times, holding him to her capacious bosom. But now—at least it wasn’t Danny boy. She understood. She knew about Bennie—about everything.

Whimpering, Danny let Major Butler lift him into the saddle. “We’re coming home first,” he whispered. “We’ve just gotta.”

Down the track the two-year-olds filed in parade, led by a dappled pony boasting a scarlet-jacketed rider. Blue Miss, nervous, bolted, came up even with Simonette. But if Danny was expecting Moran to give warning of trouble, he was mistaken. Bennie had his eyes on a somber-faced individual at the rail, a figure who exchanged look for look, despite a blackened eye and bandaged forehead. It was Memphis Red.

BLUE MISS was the trouble-maker at the barrier. Twice she shot forward, once breaking the slender tape ribbon, drawing profanity from assistant starters. Simonette, third from the rail, was on good behavior.

Suddenly the alignment became as nearly perfect as is possible for two-year-olds. Watching the starter from the corner of his eyes, Danny guessed that it was time for the trigger to snap. He leaned forward just as the webbing flashed upward.

Breaking to the rail in the first hundred feet, Danny assumed the lead over the first four horses. But out in the center of the track was a vision of flashing hoofs. And Danny realized the strategy of Bennie Moran. He had kept Blue Miss on edge purposely, so that, guessing the raising of the barrier, he had shot the filly forward, a jump ahead of the field. He had beaten the barrier.

“I gotta catch her,” Danny groaned. “I gotta!” And he called on Simonette.

But Blue Miss had something to say about being caught; she possessed an early burst of speed, and realized that fact. She led the thoroughbreds down the back stretch like a fox before a pack. Tipstaff, the East-

ern juvenile, shared equal honors with Simonette in the first heart-breaking quarter-mile.

A roar from stable hands on the rail and roofs gave Danny a foretaste of the tumult awaiting the home-stretch battle. And into the turn they shot, Blue Miss ahead, by a length, Simonette second. Tipstaff had retired for two very excellent reasons; one was the speed, the other, a handicap of one hundred and eighteen pounds.

Somewhere along the rail Mother Crit was watching. And Bennie Moran was out in front. Bennie Moran was between Danny and Mother Crit. He was ahead of Simonette, by a length. And they were in the last curve of the turn above the home stretch, where races are won—and lost.

Some men have hours—days—weeks—in which to consider and work out life crises. But Danny Crit had only seconds—split seconds in fact. He could overtake Blue Miss, with whip and every bit of fight within him, a bitter duel down the quarter-mile straightaway. He could work Simonette by Blue Miss. But if he did, the harder part of his self-appointed task was still ahead.

That challenge he had given Bennie Moran was still ahead. But so was Mother Crit, waiting, along the rail, a hundred feet or so above the finish line. And she would know.

Danny went to his whip. White-faced, in the manner of one who has crossed his Rubicon, he worked with Simonette, held him to the rail as Blue Miss swerved toward the track center. And, before they reached the paddock gate, Simonette had cut down the filly’s lead to a half-length—a neck. And he was next to the rail.

A new roar sluiced across the infield from the stands, the two-dollar betting, long-shot plungers. A favorite was in danger. The hysterical scream of women, always the steadiest supporters of favorites, increased. And Simonette drew up—up—on—until his nose showed ahead of Blue Miss.

“You—you—rat!” Bennie Moran called. “I’ll get you.”

Danny brought down his whip, again and again. And Blue Miss dropped steadily back. Ducking his head beneath his elbow, Danny looked back. “You big bum!” he shouted. “After the race—I’m gonna git you.”

Now there were shrewd observers, along the rail and in the press box, who later mentioned the fact that Bennie Moran ceased riding Blue Miss as Simonette swept by. Anyway, Tipstaff, regaining his second wind, came thundering down from the outside, a menace to Simonette. Danny, in a panic now, whirled to his task. The steel uprights of the finish line swept toward him—a hundred feet away. Perhaps the apprentice himself threw Simonette off his stride. It will never be known. But what was known, was a sudden stumbling, Simonette going down, Danny shooting forward into space.

As if the world had grown dumb all at once, thousands witnessed the accident, mouths open. It was amazing, incredulous. And nobody but the placing stewards recorded the fact that Tipstaff swept by first, Blue Miss second.

Perhaps the strangest thing was the conduct of Bennie Moran. Popping out from the weighing room after dismounting, he averted his face from the scene, Danny, dazed but unhurt, standing beside Major Butler as a veterinarian pronounced Simonette shaken but uninjured. Moran caught a glimpse of Ed Simon, still trembling from reaction. "Gotta beat it back to Maryland," he said. "Old lady's sick. Just got a wire. So long."

And before Simon could ask questions, Bennie was running up the track. Coming out of jockey quarters, he glimpsed Memphis Red's battered countenance. Throwing discretion to the winds, Moran ignored the track exit. He went over the fence and fairly crawled into a passing taxi.

From atop the fence, Memphis Red watched Moran's departure. "Guess it's the best way," he observed. "He'll never worry Danny any more." He rubbed a sore chin thoughtfully. "All I gotta do," he added, "is to hunt up Spike Dugan. He's the bird that blackjacked me."

MAJOR BUTLER'S Simonette and other racing strings were aboard a special train for Churchill Downs Sunday morning. Some would remain at the track until the fall racing. Others would disperse upon choosing future operation. From a stool

near the sliding door, a bearded, dust-covered figure gazed out at the passing landscape. He stroked his chin thoughtfully.

Presently Memphis Red rose from his straw pallet, brushed dirt and other débris from his overalls and stretched lazily. "Say, Polka Dot," he suggested, "let's eat them two ham sandwiches now."

"Nope," Polka Dot decided. "It'll be sundown before we reach Louisville. Better eat around one o'clock. Still got a couple of apples in my coat."

"All right," Memphis Red agreed, sighing. "But I feel plumb weak. Kind of wish we'd held out some on our Simonette bet. Then at least we'd have had eating money."

"If we hadn't hocked our wardrobe," Polka Dot pointed out, "for that extra eighteen dollars, we'd be eating—in jail. That's the trouble about board bills," he added sagely. "Our credit was too good. Ninety-eight dollars!"

Memphis laughed suddenly. "See Mother Crit shove that guard to one side getting out on the track to Danny? She moved like a battleship."

"Just how," Polka Dot inquired, "did Mother Crit get up to Latonia? Danny write her?"

"No," Memphis explained. "I did. After Bennie and his gang sapped me—and laid me out on that road with a note to beat it—I got clean mad. First thing when I got back to town was to wire her. Then I laid low. Got patched up as I told you. Danny'll always believe he scared Bennie Moran away. Let him think it. It'll help him. Gosh—I'm hungry!"

"Tonight," Polka Dot observed, "when we face that free feed at Mother Crit's, we'll feel like millionaires again. And I've got a job with Major Butler—stables."

"Buttonholing suckers for me," Memphis Red mourned. "We had some ups and downs this summer."

Polka Dot chuckled, caressed the shiny walking cane protruding from his bundled coat. "We were knights of the turf, Memphis. But our syndicate's busted now. We're unhorsed—buck privates. But we did save Danny Deever from hanging."

Another of Sam Carson's spirited stories of the racetrack next month.

A Girl's Fight for Life and Love

The Devonshers

Startling Testimony in the Case of the State vs. Eve Devonsher Shows an Unsuspected Growth of Hatred and Rancor

By Honoré Willsie Morrow

Illustrations by Ernest Fuhr

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story up to this point is here.

PETER rose slowly, a tall, lean figure in khaki, and limped across the room to the witness chair. Eve watched him with a curious mingling of feelings: as if she were looking at one who was at once a complete stranger and the friend of her heart. . . .

It was the trial of Eve Devonsher for the murder of Angus Duncan.

In his branding corral, as the sun shot clear of Gray Bull Mountain, Minnie Duncan found her husband's body. Her father Sid Brownell, the sheriff, established that he had been killed at short range by a bullet from a .44 rifle; and setting aside as utterly improbable that an ordinary horse thief would kill, he had but one theory—that it was the deed of an enemy. There were just two .44 rifles in Antelope Basin; and one of these was owned by the only enemy whom Minnie could name—Eve Devonsher.

Eve was a broad-minded, public-spirited girl and like her dead father and grandfather was gifted as a leader. But she had always been under the shadow of a family disgrace that dated from her grandfather's time and wrecked her father's life.

A week before the murder Eve had gone to Angus in behalf of Major Peter Colbaith of the British army to urge that he sell his horses of the Devonsher-Arabian strain to the Allies at fair prices; and when he insisted

on profiteering, her hot temper exploded. A second explosion occurred when her fiancé Howard Freeman refused to go to war, and resulted in her breaking their engagement and leaving home forthwith—for France, she said.

Sheriff Brownell, however, with Judge Jones and Peter Colbaith found her after the murder camping in a place that she frequented when she was distressed; and the judge proceeded to put her on trial, with the avowed purpose of removing forever an ancient cause of unrest in Antelope Basin.

Naturally, this purpose led to a free and open trial, in which facts painful to many other people as well as Eve and her mother were brought to light; and in which generally unknown history of Oregon Territory was brought out—for Carter Devonsher, as governor of that great country for the Hudson's Bay Company, had a great fight with his successor, Sir John Colbaith, that gave rise to much of his son's and his granddaughter's trouble. Sid Brownell's father, Angus Duncan's grandfather and Henry Worth the quarter-breed's grandfather all were closely connected with Carter Devonsher, and the Duncans and Worths had been alienated and yet dominated ever since.

These facts were brought out by old Tom Maine, who further stated that after his defeat in the duel Carter Devonsher had

made written confession to treachery to England in giving Oregon Territory to the United States.

Other witnesses gave some favorable testimony for Eve, but the general drift indicated that following many provocations at different times Eve had committed partially justifiable homicide. Then Peter was called.

A MURMUR went over the room as Peter faced the jury. Tom Maine had given the English officer's appearance as a witness an immense dramatic value. After the usual preliminaries, Colonel Johnson said:

"Major Colbaith, do you bear the family title?"

"I do, Colonel Johnson, but I prefer to be known here as Major Colbaith."

"Very well, major. At the same time I shall ask you to give the jury your full name and title. It will tie you to your grandfather, definitely."

There was a remote twinkle in Peter's blue eyes as he complied.

"Charles Peter Hubert George Frederick Colbaith, Earl of Colcourt."

"Ain't that a fright!" ejaculated old Mrs. Sherman, dropping her knitting.

"It is, madam! Really!" Peter bowed politely and the courtroom laughed.

"What brought you to Antelope Basin, major?" asked Johnson.

"I came to purchase horses for the British Army, colonel."

"Was that your sole purpose?"

"I must beg you not to press that question, sir."

"How did it come about that Miss Devonsher allied herself with you in the attempt to buy horses?"

"The stage driver told me that no one in Antelope Basin knew horses as well as Miss Devonsher. He told me of the Devonsher-Arabian strain and advised me to ask Miss Devonsher to help me pick horses of that breed. She was most kind and helpful."

"You found her a competent judge of horseflesh, major?"

Perhaps there was a remote twinkle now in Colonel Johnson's black eyes. But Peter's reply was entirely sober.

"I found her a competent judge not only of horses, colonel, but I found her the most competent judge of the enormity of the

catastrophe pending in Europe that I have met in Antelope Basin. She has a splendid knowledge of history and a keen interest in the making of it."

"I see. Nevertheless, you found, did you not, that your choice of Miss Devonsher as a guide was unfortunate?"

"As far as the purchase of horses went, yes. As a companion, she is not to be equaled." Peter said this with an earnestness and dignity that was not to be misinterpreted.

"Yet she seemed to be disliked by the people of the Basin," stated Johnson.

"Not disliked, colonel. Many people evidently liked Miss Devonsher. But even these were astoundingly quick to resent her interference regarding the price of horseflesh. I would say that people resented her, not disliked her."

Colonel Johnson nodded. "How did you account for this frame of mind, major?"

"I didn't account for it except to wonder if it were only her general mental superiority to the other people in Antelope Basin that made them so extraordinarily sensitive about her."

"Ouch!" exclaimed a voice in the back of the room.

Judge Jones pounded on his desk.

"Did you believe she had gone to France, major?"

"Yes, sir, I did."

"You were with Judge Jones and Sheriff Brownell when they brought her in. Did she act to you like a person with a guilty conscience?"

"She acted to me like a person who had been tormented beyond endurance."

"You haven't answered my question, major."

Peter sighed. "I thought I had. She did not act so."

"Did you hear Minnie Brownell Duncan's indictment of her at the Red Cross meeting after which Eve left ostensibly for France?"

"Yes!" Peter's drawl became more pronounced. "A woman capable of saying and doing what Mrs. Duncan said and did, is herself perfectly capable of murder."

"Tut! Tut! Major, I can't allow you to say that sort of thing!" exclaimed Johnson while the judge again pounded on his desk to still the murmur that filled the room.

Peter was not at all daunted. "I don't see why it's any more shocking to speak

so of Mrs. Duncan than to try Miss Devonsher for such a crime. Really."

Colonel Johnson went on hastily. "Did you see Miss Devonsher after the Red Cross meeting and before she left Antelope Basin?"

"Yes!" Peter's eyes now focused on Eve's tortured gaze. "Yes, I did."

"When and where was that meeting, major?"

"It was not a meeting, Colonel Johnson. She left the church and a half-hour later I went into the tavern corral for my horse. Miss Devonsher was hidden behind the alfalfa stack. She was standing with her head bowed on her arm, weeping as if her heart were broken. I stole away without her seeing me."

Colonel Johnson cleared his throat. "And that was the only time that you saw her till you came upon her in company with the judge and the sheriff?"

"Yes," answered Peter.

"Major Colbaith, from whom did you buy the Princess horse?"

"From Henry Worth."

"Henry Worth! Do you know how Henry got hold of her?"

"Worth told me that Mrs. Devonsher asked me to buy the horse: that he was acting merely as agent. The negotiations were carried on by letter and the situation seemed to me entirely natural. The horse was brought to Cheyenne by a strange man. I didn't ask his name. The horse was her own credential, though she was in bad trim. My theory is, Duncan kicked the horse."

"Doc Peabody also asked you to buy the Princess horse, did he not?"

"Yes."

"Were you not surprised?"

"Many seemingly more important matters were pressing on me. I gave little thought to the matter at the time."

"**MAJOR COLBAITH**, what brought you back to Antelope Basin the second time?"

Peter hesitated, his sensitive mouth twitched a little with the discomfort of the ordeal; then he replied carefully: "The doctor told me that I must get a few weeks' rest. I was keenly interested in Antelope Basin. I decided to rest here."

"Why the interest in the Basin?"

Peter looked at Colonel Johnson, squarely.

"The western part of the States is more hostile to Great Britain than any other part. I found a peculiarly raw variety of that hostility in Antelope Basin and I came back to study it."

"Why?"—laconically from the prosecuting attorney.

"Your Ambassador to Great Britain said recently that if the English-speaking nations of the world would ally themselves, there would be no more war in the world. We who have been in the trenches are not keen about war. I would give my life gladly to form such an alliance as your Ambassador talks of. But people of the frame of mind of you people in Antelope Basin absolutely block such a method of maintaining peace. I came back to find out why you hate us so."

"All of which is, of course, vastly beside the subject," Colonel Johnson said impatiently.

"One moment, colonel!" Judge Jones leaned forward over his desk and twisted his fringe of beard violently. "Major Colbaith, did you know the history of your grandfather's relationship to Carter Devonsher?"

"No, judge. I knew only that he had been governor of the so-called Oregon Territory for the Hudson's Bay Company."

"You can see, can you not, that Sir John Colbaith's mishandling of Carter Devonsher caused Great Britain to lose this inland empire?"

Peter's color rose. "The evidence was by no means full proof of that!"

"And don't you see"—the judge ignored Peter's protest—"that the hatred of the British in this valley is practically a personal thing, focused on that renegade Englishman, Carter Devonsher?"

Peter's drawl was biting. "Your deduction is absurd. You Americans have always canonized the man who turned traitor to England."

"No one canonized Devonsher. No one knew his part in the Americanizing of this territory. But they knew that England had cast him out and he made no bones of his scorn of American institutions. He was, as Doc Peabody said, a man without a country. And his endeavor to avoid the results of his own deeds has tainted Antelope Basin to the third generation. We have, sir, no very exalted opinion in this valley of the governing class of Englishmen."

"Then," returned Peter, "you can have no great opinion of your own governing class, for it is heir of all our ideals. Not only your institutions, but the men who administer them are of British brain and blood."

"**Y**OU grossly exaggerate!" shouted Judge Jones. He glared at Peter, who returned the glare with interest. Eve half rose from her chair, as if she had reached the limit of endurance, but sank back as Peter leaned toward the judge to drawl:

"Do I exaggerate when I say that you men and women of Antelope Basin by your attitude toward Eve Devonsher all her life, culminating in this trial, are traitors to your great heritage?"

The judge turned abruptly to the prosecuting attorney. "Colonel Johnson, proceed."

Colonel Johnson teetered on his neat little feet and spoke as sternly as a small man can to a larger. "Major Colbaith, after you went back to Cheyenne, did you buy other horses, besides the Princess horse?"

"Yes, several hundred."

"Where did you get them?"

"Agents shipped them in from various points."

Johnson nodded. "From Utah, perhaps?"

"Yes," answered Peter steadily. "I received an especially fine shipment from Utah. From what I know now, I'd say many of them were of Devonsher-Arabian strain."

"Do you recall anything peculiar about the horses, other than their obvious good qualities?"

"Yes, one lot of twenty-odd was accompanied by their owner, a Ute Indian, who insisted on receiving payment in cash."

"Did the circumstance make you suspect he'd stolen them?"

Peter smiled. "I dared have no suspicion. The need of horses is enormous at home."

Colonel Johnson turned to Jim Poinexter, saying: "You may have the witness, sir."

Jim rose with a smile to which Peter responded cheerfully. "Major, you spoke a little while ago of Eve's understanding of European conditions. Do you think that understanding due only to the fact that Eve is a teacher of history?"

"No, sir!" replied Peter. "Eve Devonsher is a descendant of one of the governing

families of England. It is her birthright to see nations in the large; to think internationally. The curse of you Americans is your inability to get the world view of things. It is especially the curse of Westerners. Miss Devonsher has been handicapped in every possible way, yet the family heritage has persisted. If Antelope Basin could get this point of view about her, it would see how absurd is this idea of her carrying on a personal vendetta."

"You spoke of Mrs. Duncan's disgusting indictment of Eve, and added that, being capable of such indictment, she would be capable of murder. Was that an idle surmise on your part?"

"I object!" shouted Colonel Johnson.

"Get on with your answer, major," said the judge.

Peter hesitated, looked from Jim to Minnie, from Minnie to Eve, then said stiffly: "A jealous woman can go great lengths. I have no personal knowledge of Mrs. Duncan's jealousy save what I learned one day when I deterred her from going into the tavern to annoy Mrs. Devonsher. Mrs. Duncan turned on me and gave me a terrible wiggling for my loyalty to Eve Devonsher. She seemed to me insane as much from remorse of some kind as from righteous anger. I'm not insinuating at all that she shot her husband; I'm merely insisting that her guilt is just as probable as Eve's."

"My Gawd, you bloody Britisher, you're trying to slur a woman!" shouted a man, near the window.

"Eve Devonsher is a woman," returned Peter quietly.

Minnie Duncan shrieked suddenly and incoherently. Judge Jones brought his gavel down heavily.

"Court is adjourned," he said, "until nine o'clock tomorrow morning."

THE spectators were thrillingly interested in Minnie Duncan's hysterics, but Sid, leaving his daughter to her mother, stolidly cleared the courtroom, ending the task by leading forth the jury. All this he accomplished without so much as a glance at the prisoner.

Eve stood clutching her mother's fingers and gazing in horror across the room where Minnie laughed and sobbed and jabbered unintelligibly.

"But she didn't do it!" Eve exclaimed as

Peter came up, his face extraordinarily stern.

"Probably not. But let her squirm a bit. A measure of her own medicine may cure her of some of her cattishness."

Jim Poindexter, Colonel Johnson and Judge Jones had been conferring together over the judge's desk. Johnson now hurried over to Minnie while Judge Jones and Jim joined Eve's group.

"My Lord, what a session!" exclaimed Poindexter. "Major, you and Doc Peabody are wonderful witnesses for the defense. Really I was sorry for Colonel Johnson."

"You needn't be!" The judge's voice was grim. "He probably has several shots in his gun, yet. Do you want to talk to Eve, Jim?"

"Not tonight, he doesn't!" cried Eve, the twinkle in her tired eyes. "He has mental indigestion almost as badly as I. What I want most in the world is a gallop on Shawnee. There! They have quieted her." She was looking across the room at the Colonel, who had his arm around Minnie's heaving shoulders. "Poor Minnie!"

"I don't see why you should be sorry for her!" The judge gave Eve an inquiring glance. She flushed and turned to Mary.

"Good night, mother dear. It's been a long, terrible day for you, I know."

Mary looked up into her tall daughter's face. "Nothing matters but you, Eve!"

The three men turned away while Eve held her mother in her arms, her cheek on the graying head, her eyes full of unshed tears. After a moment, Mary started blindly for the door and Eve walked slowly past the judge's desk into the darkening passageway and so to her cell. Peter followed her, clanging the barred door behind him.

Again the cell was filled with the living glow of the sinking sun, and in its quivering warmth the two stood staring at each other. Since morning, their acquaintanceship had been lengthened by more than half a century and both were deeply conscious of the significance of that fact.

"I can't thank—" began Eve, falteringly.

She paused and looked at Peter. He was smiling at her with such gentleness and such simple faith that suddenly all her hard-won fortitude deserted her, a great sob racked her and she bowed her face in her hands. The next moment Peter's arm was about her shoulders.

"Don't, Eve! Don't!" he said, huskily. "That, I cannot endure!"

"I won't!" panted Eve. "It's just—it's just that your loyalty is something that—" She lifted her head and smiled, without trying to finish the sentence.

"That's right!" Peter patted her shoulder, gently. "That's right! Up and at 'em, soldier!"

There was silence in the cell for a moment while the two continued to stare at each other and the sounds of a hilarious crowd drifted in from the Plaza. Then Peter said wonderingly: "So they fought a duel, those two! They messed the whole thing up, didn't they!"

Eve nodded. "I wish we could undo it all and start them over again. Did your grandfather's life end successfully?"

"Yes, as far as any of us knew. He achieved the earldom—if that is a measure of success. If things had been managed better—Lord, what a difference it would have made to the United States! It was a great tragedy."

"I'M GLAD we have Oregon," said Eve, "even if my grandfather did a traitorous act in giving it to us!"

"Are you? I wonder! Was it worth the price? A marvelous tract of country, yes. But—it was really race treachery. I hate to think of it. Consider what has grown of it all, how vastly it has fed the antagonism between our two countries. I wonder—" Peter lifted his hand and for the first time mentioned its scar to Eve. "That has become a symbol to me. The sign manual of the insular prejudices, the selfishness, that have kept the English-speaking peoples from allying themselves against war in the world."

He was silent for a moment, then he smiled. "What a wonderful time old Tom Maine gave himself! I suspect he's the hero of the hour, in Antelope Basin."

"The celebration has begun now, probably, in Henry Worth's saloon. Henry is going to be very generous for the rest of the time the trial continues, I suspect."

Eve sighed and looked toward the cell door where Lee Fu suddenly appeared with her supper. Peter took his leave and Eve ate her meal alone.

Afterward she lay on her cot, hands clasped under her head, striving to dull her anxiety of mind by concentrating on the night sounds that floated across the Plaza.

She knew that Tom Maine would be enthroned in Henry's Place and that the trial would be rehashed from every possible angle. She knew that by nine o'clock every man who could get away from his wife had crowded into the barroom and she knew that Sid Brownell had achieved an evening's freedom because, about ten, she heard his voice. It was little the worse for drink, yet it pierced like a golden arrow through the harsh murmur of many other voices. She heard Henry's voice raised in protest, and much loud laughter. Then Sid began to sing "The Oregon Trail." All other noises in the Plaza ceased.

How long the sheriff sang, Eve did not know. She lay listening to him, consumed by the epic longing for she knew not what, which she always felt when Sid sang as he was singing this night. She was roused by a loud knocking on the courthouse door followed by a short argument between the judge and Henry Worth.

"I gotta see Eve!" Henry was drunkenly vehement.

"You're drunk, Henry! Go back and close up the Place and go to bed," ordered the judge.

"I'm not drunk, I tell you! That devil of a Sid has got me going again. I've gotta tell Eve something."

"You'll tell Eve nothing. She's had all she can stand today." The door banged and the judge shuffled back to his office.

After this, Eve fell into a sleep of many nightmares.

MUCH to the disappointment of the crowded courtroom, it was not Peter whom Colonel Johnson called to the witness stand when court opened the next morning. It was Mrs. Brownell.

She was very small and faded as to eye and hair and very much lined as to face. She wore a black voile dress with a large band of crêpe around her sleeve. Minnie was built like her father, but temperamentally mother and daughter were absurdly alike. Mrs. Brownell's manner of extreme unction on the witness stand was identical with Minnie's.

Sarah Worth Brownell. Born in Antelope Basin. No relation at all to Elias Worth, the missionary. No, indeed! Her folks had been immigrants and her father and mother had died when she was a baby

and old Elias had adopted her. Her own name, somehow, had been lost in those careless, early days. Colonel Johnson permitted her to ramble on for a few moments regarding her early history. Then he shot one of his abrupt questions at her.

"Did you tell your husband that Eve Devonsher shot Angus Duncan?"

Sarah Brownell blinked but came back firmly. "I certainly did."

"Why did you tell him that?"

"Because I knew that Eve hated Angus, that she swore to get even with him, and that she did." Mrs. Brownell's voice was dogged.

"When did she swear that?"

"About a year and a half ago. Eve had just announced her engagement to Howard Freeman, the principal of the schools, here. I went right over to the tavern when I heard, to find out if it was true. There wasn't anybody round but Eve. She said it was a fact and while she was saying it, in comes Angus. He didn't pay any more attention to me than if I was a fly on the wall. He walks right up to Eve and says:

"So you won't marry me but you take on a sissy like Freeman. I'm surprised at you, Eve."

"He's a man of education and self-control," says Eve.

"And you think that will make a satisfactory husband for a woman like you?" Angus was yelling now.

"Eve got very red in the face. 'It's really none of your affair, you know, Angus.'

"But he went right on yelling. 'A man of fire and iron is what a Devonsher woman needs and you plan to marry that Boston bean-pot. Well, you'll never do it.'

"Yes, I shall do it," says Eve, 'and if you say anything more against Howard, I'll hold you to account for it.'

"Hold me to account for it! Make him bite me, I suppose! Eve,' he says, going still closer up to her, 'I could stand being married to Minnie-as long as I knew no man had you. But the day you give yourself to Freeman, I'll shoot you.'

"Eve—you know you can't frighten her; she's brazen as brass—Eve, she laughs, kind of, and says: 'Too bad you have that crooked streak in you, Angus. You'd have been a man for a woman to tie to, but for that.'

"I got back of the door when she said that,

for I didn't know what Angus would do. Well, I soon found out. He just grabbed Eve tight, so she couldn't run, and kissed her fifty times. When he let go of her, she was madder than I've ever seen her, and I've known her temper since she was born. 'Angus,' she says, 'I'm not so keen about these threats of shooting but I swear to you now that if you ever lay finger on me again, I'll shoot you as I would a coyote!' And she turned around and walked out of the room. And I came out from behind the door and I told Angus what I thought of him as a husband to my Minnie. And what happened in the tavern I'll bet happened again in the old branding corral."

Mrs. Brownell wagged her head with indescribable gusto. Eve sat with a long hand shading her eyes. Peter crossed and recrossed his legs, uneasily, while a slow flush settled in his thin cheeks. Jim Poin-dexter was obviously about to make the usual protest when a voice rose behind him.

"Mother, that's all a lie. He got all over loving Eve. He did! He did! You know you always hated him, and you're just getting even." It was Minnie shrieking wildly from her seat behind her father.

Judge Jones rose in his place and glared at Minnie and she stopped, in mid-flight as it were.

"I had reason to hate him, didn't I?" asked Mrs. Brownell of the jury, which nodded as one person. All, that is, but Mrs. Sherman, who looked up from her knitting to remark:

"Dog eat dog, I'd say."

There was a delighted roar from the spectators, which subsided of itself as Colonel Johnson asked Mrs. Brownell a question.

"Did you know of an enmity between Henry Worth and your husband?"

"Yes, I did. And I don't altogether blame Henry. Music is torture to him. Sid's voice even makes me feel bad after all these years of living with it. Henry's quarter Indian and lots of Indians are like dogs. They can't stand music. That's the big hold old Elias Worth had on his squaw. He could sing out of her every beaver skin she'd cached away for her own use. That used to be one of the jokes of Fort Jason. Sid told that story about Henry and the Devonsher stallion as if he was perfectly innocent. Humph! Sid's just a big overgrown boy and he's always had a

lot of fun torturing Henry with 'The Oregon Trail.' I don't much blame Henry for getting even with him."

"You speak, Mrs. Duncan, as though you were fond of Henry Worth."

"Everybody likes Henry," said the sheriff's wife complacently. "He's a nice chap. I'd have been willing for him to marry Minnie, except for his Injun blood. Not that he wanted to marry her!"—with a hasty glance at Henry. "Seems he was after Eve, too. I can't see why."

"Mrs. Brownell"—Johnson put his head on one side and teetered back and forth—"have you observed a general prejudice in the Basin against Eve Devonsher?"

"The Lord knows the men ain't prejudiced against her! Ain't I just been telling you?" Then with a great air of fairness: "As long as Eve stuck to her school-teaching she was liked well enough. Except folks resented her trying to do things for the Basin. As if she felt herself above the rest of us. Her family didn't make good, and yet Eve always has gone round as if they had. I suppose she really thought she could get away with shooting Angus because her grandfather once owned the whole of Antelope Basin."

Colonel Johnson turned to Jim Poin-dexter. "Would you like to question the witness, sir?"

"If you have quite finished, colonel."

"I have quite finished."

JIM eyed the witness for a full half-minute; then he asked, "Mrs. Brownell, how did the ranch on which Angus and Minnie lived come into Angus's possession?"

"He inherited it from Rob Duncan, his father."

"And from whom did Rob obtain it?"

"It was the ranch Carter Devonsher made over to Dave Devonsher the day Dave was born. Rob, he got hold of it on mortgage when Dave was about fifteen."

"I see. That was the ranch 'Bear' Folsom told us about? The ranch he and Dave sought to save by trapping?"

"Yes. Well, Dave was no rancher, as he proved afterward; so it was just as well the ranch got into thrifty hands, like Rob's and Angus's."

"I see. Now, Mrs. Brownell, tell the jury what really gave Hugh Duncan his start in life."

"Oh, he was just a natural-born skinflint! He gouged the Indians and he gouged the trappers while he was a factor for Carter Devonsher, and when he followed Carter down here and Carter's luck turned, he had money to loan Carter on mortgages and the nerve to foreclose. Rob and Angus were just like him."

"You were willing for your daughter to marry a skinflint?"

"Minnie wanted him," replied Mrs. Brownell simply.

Jim contemplated the woman in silence. The clean mountain wind swept down from Gray Bull and through the windows, bearing with it the odor of the cedar grove. Mrs. Brownell's gaze roved through the open door and rested for a moment on the new-made grave below the cedars, then returned to the jury.

"Besides," she said, "almost anything is better than poverty. We couldn't do much for Minnie. The annuity ended with old Jackson."

"What annuity, Mrs. Brownell?"

"The one Carter left to Jackson Brownell and his son, Sid. And mind, I don't think that was hush money. I don't think old Jackson Brownell would have pretended he was the father of John Worth for all the money in Oregon. He hated the Worths too much and cared too little for money."

"Why did he hate the Worths?"

"Well, he was crazy about swell families and had no use for common folks. He was British till he died. Always called the Indians niggers and wouldn't deal with them. The only thing that could have made him think for a minute of saying he was the father of John Worth would have been to save the Devonsher name and perhaps because of Mrs. Carter Devonsher."

"Ah, yes! What of Mrs. Carter Devonsher?"

A sigh of expectancy went over the room which did not escape Mrs. Brownell. She licked her lips and replied with elaborate carelessness: "Oh, she was one of the delicate, exclusive kind. Very pretty. Always an invalid, pining for England. Carter was always very polite to her; treated her as if she was a queen. Jackson used to tell about the wonderful family she came from in England. Lord, it would make a good American sick to hear him! If she had got suspicious that Carter was mixing up with a

squaw, I suppose either Carter or Jackson would have lied the truth out of Oregon. But I doubt if she had such suspicions. She kept to her own quarters at Fort Jason. She was no pioneer. She died when Dave was young. That's all that's worth knowing about her."

Jim ran his fingers savagely through his hair. "Mrs. Brownell, didn't the women in Antelope Basin give Mrs. Devonsher and Eve a bad ten years—say from the time Dave was shot until Eve came back from college at Laramie?"

"Well, we couldn't mix with 'em, could we, after all Dave had done?"

"But they had done nothing!"

"They had, too!"—furiously. "They went around with noses in the air, especially Eve, just as if her father hadn't been an ornery horse thief. It was enough to drive a decent woman crazy. Us ladies of Antelope Basin made up our minds that we was going to keep decency on top in our town. And we put the Devonsher women where they belonged."

Jim was apparently lost in admiration of Mrs. Brownell's moral standards. "Did you, indeed! How in the world did you accomplish that, Mrs. Brownell?"

"Oh, we just froze 'em out of the church and told the children not to speak to Eve in school."

"**YOU** were the leader in this purity crusade, of course!"

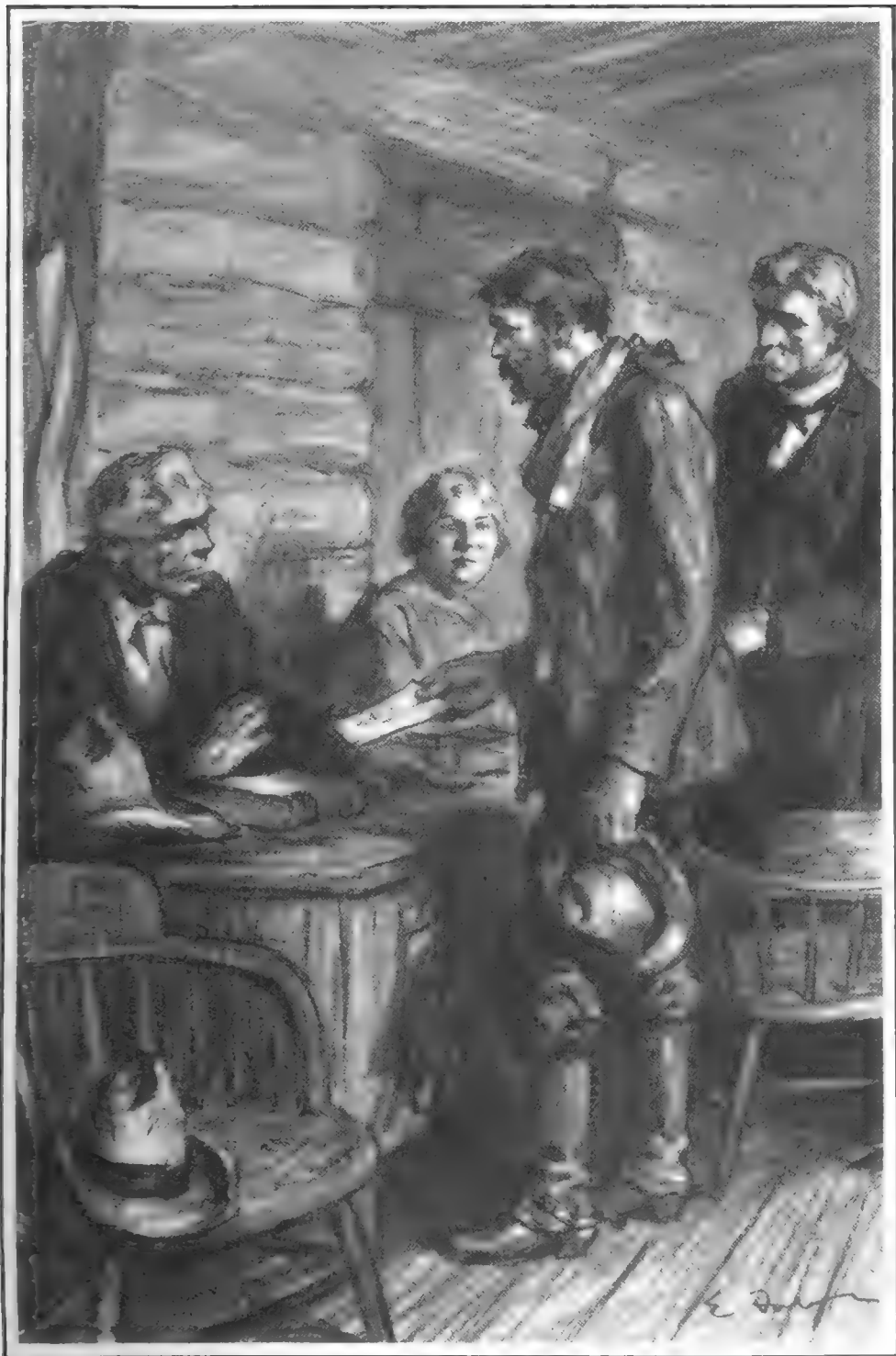
"Yes, I was. And it wasn't always easy. I could manage my own daughter but the other children were always making up to Eve. Still, I managed. There weren't many other families in town then, except just the descendants of the old Fort Jason crowd. My heavens!"—with a sudden burst of indignation. "We were sick of Devonshers! Carter acted as though Antelope Basin was his private estate and us all servants in it."

"But wasn't that originally so?" asked Jim.

"Well, maybe, at first. But we fixed him—the Duncans and the Worths—all except Sid, of course."

"And how did Eve and her mother take their punishment?"

Mrs. Brownell shrugged her shoulders. "What could they do? They kept to themselves until after Eve started teaching in



"Say, judge!" Folsom broke in. "I thought I ought to show you what the mail stage just brought me." . . . The judge took out of the envelope nine bank-notes.

the high school here. When we saw that they'd had their lesson we sort of let up on them."

"Meaning, perhaps, that they'd lost all their property and could no longer be a social menace?"

"I don't know what you are driving at, Mr. Poindexter. What I mean"—her voice rose—"what I mean is that we got tired of folks putting on dog when they couldn't deliver the goods. Carter Devonsher was smart. The rest of 'em, Dave and Eve, weren't. And that's that."

Mrs. Brownell's nod still was complacent. Jim's training as a lawyer was struggling with his growing desire to tell the woman how much he despised her, when an interruption occurred. Bear Folsom strode in through the open door and up to the front of the room.

"Say, judge!" he said. "I thought I ought to show you what the mail stage just brought me." He laid an envelope on the desk.

The judge took out of the envelope, one at a time, nine bank-notes. He looked up into the rancher's agitated face. "There's nine hundred dollars here, Folsom!"

"Yes," cried Folsom. "Just the price Eve had Major Colbath offer me for those three horses. And look, judge, that envelope was postmarked from Salt Lake City a week before Eve was arrested. Lame Jack has four more envelopes like this, dated the same way, he says. And he owned up he lost this bag of mail when his mules ran off with the stage a month ago, and he found it in the sagebrush above Lone Tree when he got out of the buckboard this morning to shoot a coyote."

"Sheriff," ordered Judge Jones, "go over to the post office, bring those letters here to me and telephone the addressees to come to court, at once."

His jaw sagging, Sid rolled out of the courtroom.

"We'll take fifteen minutes' recess," said Judge Jones to the two attorneys.

But not a soul left the packed courtroom for fear of losing his seat. There was a steady murmur of voices but otherwise no advantage was taken of the judge's announcement. Eve stared at the pile of bank-notes with what seemed to Peter a strange expression of satisfaction. Sid rolled back panting and deposited four other envelopes before the judge.

"All the addressees are in court," he gasped.

Judge Jones read the superscriptions and at each one a man rose. "Have I your permission to open these envelopes?" asked the judge.

The ranchers gave eager assent and shortly there lay in five piles on the desk, seventy-five hundred dollars in new bank-notes.

"Everything there but for Angus's horses!" exclaimed Sid.

"Deliver the money to the addressees but return the envelopes as Exhibit B," ordered Judge Jones. Then he turned to Jim Poindexter. "Of course, Mr. Poindexter, this doesn't alter the fact that we are trying Eve Devonsher for the shooting of Angus Duncan. Proceed with the cross-examination."

"I have finished," replied Jim briefly.

Mrs. Brownell returned to her seat beside her daughter, and Lee Fu was called to the witness chair.

The Chinaman shuffled up slowly. He was a tall man, broad of shoulder, with a square-cut face, deep-set black eyes and a heavy rope of cue wrapped around his head. He wore a fine black silk blouse and loose trousers and was as composed in manner as Judge Jones himself.

"YOU have worked for the Devonsher family for many years, Lee Fu, have you not?" asked the colonel.

"Since Missy was baby, twenty-five, twenty-six year."

"Did you help Miss Eve get her pack outfit ready for France?"

"Yes, like always."

"Did you pack the .44 rifle for her?"

"Yes, like always."

"But, Lee Fu, didn't you think it queer for her to take a gun on a trip like that?"

The Chinaman shook his iron-gray head. "Big fight over there. Missy heap need gun. Anyhow, she need gun while she hike over mountains to Utah. She take .44 rifle ever' place she go since her father die. That his life."

"But isn't that rather a queer habit for a lady, Lee Fu? Do other women in Antelope Basin carry rifles?"

"Other women in Antelope not ladies. Missy, she lady, do what she please."

Even Judge Jones grinned at this comment on the feminine society of Antelope Basin. Eve herself, watching Lee Fu with keen anxiety, chuckled.

"From the time Miss Devonsher was a little girl, she is said to have had a very bad temper. Did she ever attack or try to injure you, Lee Fu?"

It was Lee Fu's turn to grin broadly. "Yes," he said, nodding. "When she little girl, she all same like fire-clacker. But not after her father die. Big change then. She start to go crazy-mad, she stop, go off by self on horse, come back good."

"But she continued always to show that she had a bad temper?" insisted Colonel Johnson.

"Not bad temper," contradicted Lee Fu. "Hot temper, like fire-clacker. She not bad. Very good lady, Missy."

"Lee Fu, tell the jury all about Angus Duncan's visit to Mrs. Devonsher when he bought the Princess horse."

"He come plenty times. Which time you want me tell?"

"Tell all of them, Lee Fu."

The Chinaman looked at Eve. "Missy, you want me tell all I hear?"

"Tell the truth, Lee Fu."

He shook his head sadly, but turned back to the jury. "Angus, he came one night, 'long 'bout nine o'clock. Missy, she gone to Flance. Miss Maly, she gone bed. No one else in tavern but me. Angus, he make me go call Miss Maly. She come out in living-loom, all lapped up in bath-lobe. Angus say he want buy PlinCESS horse. Miss Maly grunt and tell him he's crazy. Angus, he say Missy say he can buy PlinCESS horse. Miss Maly ask him why he think of such lies. Angus say Missy say she solly all things she say to Angus; now she go to Flance, she want Angus have PlinCESS horse. Miss Maly, she tell me to throw Angus out the door. I throw him out."

Lee Fu joined appreciatively in the laughter that interrupted him, then returned to his story.

"Angus come back plenty time. I not always there. But one night he say to Miss Maly, Henly Worth, he Eve's cousin. Her glandfather rape Henly's squaw glandmother. He say that if Miss Maly not sell him PlinCESS horse, he tell evelybody this. He talk to Miss Maly a long time like this, too low for me hear, but by and by Miss

Maly call me in from kitchen and tell me bring PlinCESS horse up to Angus' corral. When I get back Miss Maly she heap sick and I go get Doc Peabody. He tell me keep my mouth shut and he will go up see Angus."

"DID the doctor go to see Angus Duncan?" asked the colonel.

"Angus, he come in while Doc 'tend Miss Maly. Doc Peabody, he smash Angus on the nose. But Angus won't give up PlinCESS horse. Doc Peabody tell Angus he'll shoot him some day. Angus wipe his nose and go out."

"Lee Fu, do you know if Miss Eve got word that Angus Duncan had bought the Princess horse, before she came back to Antelope Basin?"

"Yes, Henly Worth, he got word to her."

"How do you know that, Lee Fu?"

"He meet me lead PlinCESS horse away to Angus' corral. He tly make me tell how Miss Maly come sell but I won't. Don't like that story about Missy's glandfather. Then he ask me do I know Missy no gone to Flance. I say yes, I hear him tell Miss Maly that month ago. He ask me what I think Missy do if she know about the PlinCESS horse and I tell him she break her heart, then go shoot Angus. Henly Worth laugh and say if that so, he guess he better get word to Missy. I ask him how and he say he know how. That's all he say. But by and by Angus git shot, so I know Missy she know."

Lee Fu smiled frankly and with satisfaction in every line of his face.

"And you say it was Miss Eve who shot Angus Duncan, Lee Fu? That's a terrible thing, you know."

"How tellible?" asked the Chinaman. "Missy, she rightful owner all this land; Brownells, Worths, Duncans, they her servants. They act worse than coolies. In China, they'd have heads cut off long ago. Yellow dogs!" Lee Fu's voice dropped to a snarl of utter ferocity.

Colonel Johnson allowed this pleasant sentiment to sink in on the jury for a moment; then he asked:

"Lee Fu, did Miss Eve or her mother say anything to you or in your hearing that made you more sure that Miss Eve shot Angus?"

"No."

"Have you told me all that you know about your idea that Miss Eve shot Angus Duncan?"

"All I think of now. I got go back get dinner for jury."

"You must wait," said the colonel gravely, "until Mr. Poindexter has questioned you."

"**L**EE FU," asked Poindexter, "why did you say to Miss Eve so many times, 'They can't put Missy in jail'?"

"Because 'Melican law all wrong. Lady like Missy should punish her servants and coolies. Law keep out. Law for people not servants on big lands like Worths and Duncans and Brownells. Angus bad man. Should die. Missy kill 'em. Can't put Missy in jail."

Jim bit his lip. The Chinaman's very love for Eve was adding to the impending ruin.

"You may go back to the tavern and get the jury's dinner now, Lee Fu," he said. And after a questioning look at Eve, who smiled at him with tragedy in her eyes, the Chinaman shuffled out into the summer sunshine.

"Your Honor"—Colonel Johnson turned to the judge—"I would like to ask for an adjournment during the rest of the day while I look up the matter of the cash payment to the ranchers whose horses were stolen."

"I object!" cried Jim Poindexter. "My client is in such a state of strain that a half-day added to the trial will be unendurable."

Judge Jones looked at Eve. "Suppose we let the prisoner express an opinion as to that. Eve, can you stand having the matter mentioned looked into?"

"I haven't the remotest idea of how long I am going to be able to stand up under this bludgeoning," replied Eve in a low voice; "but if Uncle Jim is willing to give the half-day, I am."

This was the information Jim desired from Eve. "We'll take the adjournment," he said.

Thus Eve was permitted to remain in her cell that afternoon.

It was Mary Devonsher who brought Eve's dinner to her. "You are getting so thin, Eve," said Mary as she arranged the tray beside Eve on the cot, "that it makes good food rise in my throat when I try to

eat. I thought that if I'd sit by you during your meals when I could, you'd have a better appetite."

"It's so hard on you, mother, coming to me here!" protested Eve.

"Don't you want me, Eve?"

"Want you! Mother, I've wanted you more and more, as each awful day passes. You are all I have in the world."

Mary flushed with pleasure. "Try some of the tomato soup, Eve. And I'm not going to talk about the trial to you, either. I guess both of us have long known what we know."

Eve nodded. "Mother, did you ever think we could endure more shame than we did in the years after father's death? And yet, after these last days, here we are, still able to swallow food."

Mary's lips compressed. "You know that neither of us will ever get over what we are suffering now. But there is nothing to do but face it, that I can see. Eve, that Major Colbaith couldn't treat me better if he were my son. I don't care if he is a lord or an earl or what not."

"I wonder why he is so wonderfully friendly," mused Eve.

"I guess you know, all right!" exclaimed Mary.

Eve made no pretense at misunderstanding her mother. "Not a word has passed between us, mother, nor, I believe, will pass. Contrast his position and mine."

"You are good enough for a king!" declared Mary. "Don't you let all this stuff break your pride, Eve Devonsher."

"Pride!" Eve laughed mirthlessly. "Pride! And all the desire I have left in the world is to run away and hide. Mother—they will give me a term of years in Rawlins when they finish manhandling me. And that would wreck me. Mother—" Eve suddenly dropped on her knees and buried her face in her mother's lap. "Mother, let's agree never to let that happen!"

Mary Devonsher pressed the ruddy head between both her trembling hands, her face deathly white against the gray-green walls. Outside, the free hills of Wyoming stretched away and away into the infinite purple heavens—the free hills, of which Eve was so integral a part!

"Eve! Eve!" she whispered. "They've forgotten, those men, that after all, you are a woman!"

Eve lifted her flushed face. "Mother, have you found that, when it comes to matters of pride or profit, men will give one inch to you because you are a woman?"

"No! God knows in this valley they've taken every advantage they could of our sex. Chivalry of the West! It's a ghastly joke!"

Eve nodded. "Don't think that these men who have trapped me will look on me as anything but the descendant of two men whom they hated. They are determined to shut me up in Rawlins. Mother, I shall never let them do so."

Mary moistened her white lips. "What do you mean, Eve?"

Eve rose and stood tall, straight and slender against the barred door. "I mean that I shall shoot myself after they pass sentence."

"You mean—" Mary paused, her eyes wide with horror. "Oh, Eve! Take the punishment! Take the punishment! It would be only a few years. We can trust Willy Jones for that much. I'd be waiting here for you and we could go away, afterward, and find peace in some part of the world."

Eve backed against the door, hands flinging backward in a gesture of hopeless horror. They touched the iron bars and she screamed as though in mortal pain.

"No! No! No! You can't understand! These! These! For months and years! I go mad merely in thinking of it."

For a moment, the glimpse into her daughter's agony of mind seemed to paralyze Mary's power of speech or thought. Then the old habit of self-control resumed sway.

"Eve, come here to mother," she said with gentle authority.

SHUDDERING, Eve dropped to the cot and buried her face in her mother's lap. Mary smoothed the glory of her hair for a moment or two; then she said in a low voice:

"It shall be as you wish, Eve. If they sentence you to Rawlins, you need never go nor shall I stay behind you. Without you, life would be empty for me. We'll leave it, together."

For a long time Eve said nothing. But gradually she ceased to shiver and finally she sat up and looked clearly into Mary's eyes.

"That kind of death," she said, "I do not

fear. To me, death is reincarnation. Another opportunity. Perhaps, in a new life, I would not be a Devonsher. Only a simple human being, unshadowed by my family."

"That cannot be," said Mary. "In any life you'll be hag-ridden by your ancestors. I don't see how it could be otherwise. All I ask is, if there is another life, I may know you in it."

Eve was standing now and she looked down at her mother with tender, half-adoring eyes. "Amen to that!" she murmured. Then with a face strangely calmed, she fell to pacing the floor, but slowly, without agitation. After a while, her mother cleared up the half-eaten meal, and smoothed the bed-coverings.

"Will you lie down, dear, and let me sit by you?" she suggested.

Docilely as a child, Eve stretched her long body on the cot. Her mother took her hand.

"Your long, long fingers, like your father's!"

"Mother," said Eve, "did you love my father?"

"Very much, at first. But, Eve, he wore me out with his restlessness and his moods. I couldn't change him."

"Did you understand him?" asked Eve.

"I got tired of trying"—indifferently.

"Yet I am very like him, and you understand me, perfectly."

"You are my own flesh and blood. . . . He made marriage too difficult."

"I adored him and I still do!" declared Eve.

"Yes, you should, for in his own way he was a wonderful father to you."

Eve stared wonderingly at her mother. She thought of the smile that twisted her father's lips when he died. Mary, cold and harshly critical as a wife! Mary demonstrative and utterly sympathetic as a mother. What a strange thing was marriage!

Mary smoothed the long brown hand slowly and tenderly. There came to Eve the old childhood sense of security in her mother's presence at bedtime. And she fell into such restful sleep as she had not been blessed with since her imprisonment began.

It was dusk when she awoke. Her mother still was sitting patiently by her side. The afterglow that filled the cell smoothed the

lines from Mary's face and she looked to Eve like a madonna. When she saw Eve's eyes open, Mary rose stiffly.

"I'm going over to the tavern for your supper. Perhaps you'd like to have Major Colbaith bring it."

"Any one but you, mother! You are tired."

"I'll send the major, if you will promise to eat," said Mary.

Eve smiled at her mother's transparency and agreed to eat hugely. She was feeling curiously rested and cheered. When Peter arrived with the tray, she was able to meet him with a gibe.

"THE scion of the former governor of the principality of Greater Oregon presents an awful spectacle as a waiter! How am I to thank you, my lord?"

"By stowing that kind of talk," retorted Peter. "You are feeling better? Really?"

"My mother has been with me. Peter, when that chap in the Bible wanted to describe a phenomenal degree of love he shouldn't have said 'passing the love of women.' He should have said, 'passing the love of mothers.'"

"Maybe those old chaps didn't know mothers like yours. Those oriental mothers were passionate and demonstrative, but the kind of feeling your mother has for you is the product of north-country peoples. She's a type an Englishman can understand. They are not wives. They are mothers."

"You are a very understanding sort of person, Peter." Eve was dutifully beginning an attack on her supper while the major took his favorite seat against the wall, opposite. "More so, I suspect than your grandfather was."

"If Tom Maine's testimony is to be trusted, your grandfather made his position so clear that there was little danger of any one, even my respected grandparent, not understanding him."

Eve did not reply. She had no desire to rehash the painful details of the trial. After a moment she said, "Peter, did you climb Gray Bull Mountain?"

"Yes, Eve, and I saw your lake of fire. It will haunt me as it haunts you. It speaks to me somehow of you. Of your warmth and beauty and isolation. Eve, your loneliness saddens me!"

Eve looked up quickly from her tray. "Don't let it, Peter. I have mother."

"And you have me," said Peter softly.

"Yes," returned Eve. "I believe your friendship is a very steadfast thing. It may even withstand the outcome of the trial." She looked at Peter with a wistful smile.

"Of course it will!" Peter's drawl was stout. "Though friendship scarcely describes the feeling I have for you."

Eve went on hastily. "And, in my loneliness, I have what only we Westerners have: memories like the flaming lake and my father's cedar ring and—well, there was my ride to the Wind River country and back—picture after picture—too big for pen or paint brush. Peter, imprisonment can't be as hard on city folks as it is on us people of the plains. After all, our geography makes our philosophy, and the city persons' philosophy is that of the walled-in mind. Ours is of the huge open."

"You all are marked by your intense insistence on personal freedom." Peter spoke musingly. "But you are just as marked by your provincial prejudices."

"Thanks!" exclaimed Eve, making a wry face. Then she went on frankly: "I suppose I am prejudiced, though I hate to admit it. I wish I could—"

"Why don't you finish your sentence?" asked Peter.

"What's the use! I forgot for a moment that my usefulness as a citizen is finished."

"Nonsense!" shouted Peter, so suddenly and so fiercely that Eve dropped her toast. "Is that the sort of spirit that will defeat the Germans?"

"Don't howl at me as if I were a Tommy!" protested Eve, at the same time grinning boyishly. "Peter, I've just thought of another reason why we've got to defeat Germany."

"Yes?" Peter's voice returned to normal.

"Because they've got to be freed from the Hohenzollerns so that they can stand with all of us other Nordics against the yellow races."

"Now you are beginning to talk like a sane person," agreed Peter. "Eve, if you stay another month in this cell, your complexion will be marvelous. You've lost most of your tan."

"It's an expensive complexion bleach," returned Eve. "There, Peter, I've done my possible with this tray."

"Nevertheless, I shall not leave at once. Eve, when you go to England—"

"WHEN I go to England!" Eve looked around her cell and back at Peter. "Man, where is your sense of humor?"

"My sense of humor is working perfectly. It tells me that this grotesque trial can end only in the complete discomfiture of Minnie and her mother and that snake of a Henry Worth. And that after that you and I and your mother are going to England. Aren't we, Eve?"

"Peter, don't! There is no 'after that' to me."

"There you go again!"

"Yes, there I go again. Peter! Peter! My doom is written daily on every face in the courtroom save yours and mother's. Why, even Jim Poindexter is working, not to clear me, but to get me a light sentence. And again I tell you, Peter, that I shall never leave this cell for Rawlins alive."

Peter rose and stood before her. His lean, pain-lined face was set and stern. "And I tell you, Eve, if they are so indecent as to try to send you there, you must take your punishment standing."

Eve looked up at him with eyes full of misery yet with a fatalistic sort of determination.

"Peter, I shall not."

"Eve, you must."

For a long moment, they held each other's eyes; then, without another word, Peter lifted the tray and left the cell. Eve sat rigid on the edge of her cot until long after the cessation of noise in Henry's Place informed Antelope Basin of the fact that it was twelve o'clock.

Court convened promptly the next morning. Colonel Johnson at once produced the envelopes, Exhibit B, but had nothing new to add to the information about the source of the sums of money they had contained.

"Your Honor," he said as he placed the envelopes on the desk, "the prosecution is convinced that Eve Devonsher is exactly the type of person who would steal a horse and pay for it afterward. But we have no evidence to offer to back this conviction, and with the placing of these envelopes on exhibition, the state rests its case."

There was a rustle of anticipation over the room. Surely, the defense must prove at least the equal of the prosecution in

thrills! Jim Poindexter, a splendid figure of a man, smiled jovially at the jury and called the first witness for Eve. This was Howard Freeman.

He was a slender man, in a gray Norfolk suit. He wore his dark hair a little long and his black mustache clipped almost to a shadow. He had very large, very beautiful brown eyes. He was a man to whom women of Eve's virile, outdoor type would be destined to be attracted by the mere force of contrast.

When Howard had been sworn in, Jim began his questioning in a most deferential manner.

"You are principal of the high school, are you not, Professor Freeman?"

"Yes, Mr. Poindexter, I've held that position for six years."

"Will you tell the jury how Antelope Basin came to be so fortunate as to obtain your services?"

Mrs. Sherman looked up from her knitting. "Jim, every member of the jury knows more about that than either you or the professor. Why waste time?"

Poindexter smiled blandly at the old lady. "Perhaps you would prefer to question the witness, yourself, madam."

"I'll wager I could get at some facts you'd never dreamed of!" returned Mrs. Sherman stoutly.

Jim joined in the laughter and, turning back to Howard, repeated his original question.

"I was teaching in Boston," began Howard, impressively, "when I began to be troubled seriously by bronchial asthma. I had heard through a friend in Laramie that the mountains of southern Wyoming were excellent for that trouble and I applied for a school in this section. The salary offered, however, was so low and the school building so ridiculous that I was obliged to refuse to come here. It was after this refusal that Miss Devonsher wrote me asking me on what terms I would come. I told her and she replied that within a year's time she would guarantee me what I asked.

"SURE enough, a year later, the fine modern school building at the other end of the Plaza had been built and a decent wage secured for the teachers. I have been told that Miss Devonsher was entirely responsible for this; that she roused

public interest in the face of most spiteful opposition from Mrs. Brownell and her adherents; that she planned one of the greatest exhibition rodeos ever given in Wyoming, by which most of the money for the schoolhouse was raised, and that she organized the children into a fur-trapping club that in a single winter, so high was the price of furs, turned in the rest of the money. She also improvised a sort of volunteer tax levy among the ranchers here which guaranteed to the teachers' fund a certain percentage of all horses and cattle sold each year. Miss Devonsher deserves all the credit for the fact that Antelope Basin's very small school is easily the best in the state, not excepting the excellent schools of Cheyenne."

"What were Miss Devonsher's motives for doing all this?"

Howard smoothed his shadowy mustache thoughtfully. "She is the type of person who feels a personal responsibility for the welfare of her community. I never have met man or woman who has the passionate love for the land that bred her, that has Eve Devonsher. She knows every mile of this part of Wyoming as the average woman knows her dooryard. She not only glories in its beauty and immensity, but she has a sense of belonging to it, as if"—Howard hesitated, obviously finding it difficult to phrase his thought—"as if her body, built of the very soil, the air, the water of Antelope Basin, was always conscious of its kinship. I never have known any one so consciously the product of the—er—scenery, by Jove! Oh, well, it's not to be expressed! I'll just say that Miss Devonsher has a feeling for Antelope Basin that almost no one but myself understands."

"I understand it," said Judge Jones suddenly. "That's why I'm insisting that she endure this kind of a trial. With her heritage and feeling, by the eternal, Eve'll either fish or cut bait!" The judge thrust his jaw forward and brought his fist down on the table. Eve watched him, her eyes half closed in the intensity of her scrutiny.

"What do you mean by that, judge?" exclaimed Howard.

"I MEAN what I've said before at this trial—that the Devonshers owe something to Wyoming. Let them pay or quit."

"I don't think Eve—Miss Devonsher—

owes a thing to Antelope Basin," returned Howard calmly. "Her treatment here has been spiteful to the last degree."

The judge's solitary eye expressed disgust. "Lord, I thought you'd be intelligent enough to understand me! Go on, Poindexter."

"What sort of a teacher does Miss Devonsher make, professor?" asked Jim.

"She's not what I call a natural teacher. She hasn't the natural patience, the steadiness of nerves, needed to make the work easy for her. But she has splendid intelligence and will-power and by drawing heavily on these she does effective work. She can do anything with the boys. The girls whose mothers are not members of Mrs. Brownell's gang are sufficiently devoted to her to do good work under her. Of course, Miss Devonsher's specialty, history, appeals more to the masculine mind than to the feminine, so that her boys are bound to show better results than her girls."

"I shall have to ask you one or two personal questions, professor, to which you may reply or not as you please."

Eve's eyes turned from Howard to Peter. The major was sitting with his fist stiffly supporting his chin, his eyes never shifting from Howard's clean-cut face. To the casual observer, Howard looked far more the aristocrat than did Peter. But to Eve, who was seeing human beings from a new angle, the Englishman's face with its ineradicable tracery of suffering and endurance, was infinitely the nobler of the two.

"I shall answer any question which you think will show Miss Devonsher incapable of perpetrating the crime of which she's accused." Howard folded his arms on his chest and evidently mentally stood fast.

"Thank you, professor." Jim ran his fingers through his hair and glanced at his notes. "You are engaged to Miss Devonsher, are you not?"

"The engagement was just broken this spring."

"Could you tell the jury the cause?"

There was the rustle of many bodies straining forward to hear. Eve flushed deeply. But Howard, accustomed to living perpetually under the prying eyes of school children, was entirely undisturbed.

"Eve—Miss Devonsher—and I disagreed about my attitude toward the draft and, much to my sorrow, she broke the engagement. In fact, I felt so badly that my health

broke down and we closed school a month early."

"DID you have any words with Miss Devonsher about the sale of your horse to Major Colbaith?"

"Yes. She accused me of profiteering." He glanced at Eve reproachfully.

"Were you? That is, pardon me, professor, but I'm trying, you see, to place before the jury the truth regarding my client's frame of mind. If she was pre-occupied with her troubles with you, she was not wasting any time hating Angus Duncan."

"Ah, yes! Well, it's the rule of commerce that when an article is scarce and much desired the price goes up. I asked the market price then prevailing at Cheyenne."

"How much was that above normal?"

"About one hundred per cent," answered Howard coolly.

There was sudden laughter in the courtroom, quickly silenced by Judge Jones's gavel.

Jim Poindexter spoke quickly. "One hundred per cent! And Eve saw red!"

"Yes," replied Howard gravely, "Eve saw red."

"Do you know why, professor?"

"I suppose it was her—er—friendship for Major Colbaith."

"Was that the reason she gave you, professor?"

"No," answered Howard. "She wanted, she said, Antelope Basin to do its bit. She said the percentage of draft evasion in the valley was enough to blot all Wyoming's record. Perhaps a fair pricing of horses to the English would brighten our record. I told her I had no desire to give money to England that would help me to regain my strength so that I could go to war, if it lasted long enough."

"I see! You are not friendly to England, professor?"

"She's our ally, so I'll stand by her. But I consider her the most arrogant, selfishly grasping nation on earth." This with a defiant glance at Peter, who did not bat an eyelid.

"Your position as head of the school here makes your attitude particularly important," said Jim. "Did you say these things to Miss Devonsher?"

"Yes." Howard nodded drearily. "It was a wretched time."

"Where were you at the time of Miss Devonsher's arrest?"

"In Laramie. I was utterly shocked. I thought she was in France. At first, I thought the man who told me was joking; the idea of arresting Eve for murder was so preposterous."

"You have heard all the evidence regarding the defendant's family history, professor. Was it news to you?"

"A great deal of it. Eve never talked about her family to me except to tell me how she adored her father."

"Then you would not consider her boastful about her family?"

"Eve—boastful? Oh, no! She has too keen a sense of humor for that. I've heard many people accuse her of being arrogant. She's not. She has a great deal of personal dignity which stupid people might easily mistake for haughtiness."

"You have lived at the tavern for six years, professor. Did you ever observe that Angus Duncan was annoying either Mrs. Devonsher or her daughter?"

"No, I did not."

"Then, can you give any possible motive that the defendant could have for killing Angus Duncan?"

"No, I cannot."

"Thank you, professor." Jim turned to Colonel Johnson. "You may take the witness, sir."

The colonel smiled engagingly. "Did you know Angus Duncan, Professor Freeman?"

"Yes, about as I know every man in Antelope Basin."

"What was your opinion of him?"

"I thought him a curious mixture of manliness and meanness. He was notoriously miserly, yet there was something very winning about him."

"He was within draft age. Do you know by what means he evaded the draft?"

"No, I do not."

"By what means did you evade it, Professor Freeman?"

"I am a victim of chronic bronchial asthma."

"But didn't Doc Peabody consider you a complete cure several years ago?"

Howard's face was crimson. "I can't see how veiled insults thrust at me can help you to prove your case against Miss Devonsher."

"If you are a slacker, Professor Freeman,

your statements will not weigh greatly with the jury!" Johnson's smile was sardonic.

"I AM no slacker!" shouted Howard furiously. "My people fought in every war America has had since the French and Indian War. I knew a man with a heart and lungs like mine could be of more use in the training-camps here than clogging the machinery in France. Physical bravery isn't everything. It took more moral courage for me to withstand the pressure Eve Devonsher put on me than it would have taken to go over the top a hundred times."

"Then why didn't you give in to her?" asked Johnson blandly.

"Because, you fool, don't you see I wanted to live to be sure to marry her?"

The moment he had said this, Howard realized that he had made the irretrievable error. He turned a sickly white. Some one in the back of the room hissed. For a moment there was a dead silence, then Johnson went on.

"Did Miss Devonsher to your knowledge try to persuade Angus Duncan not to evade the draft?"

"I don't remember," muttered Howard.

"Perhaps I can refresh your memory. Angus Duncan and you on a certain day in May held a long conference in the living-room of the tavern. Eve Devonsher came home from a horse-prospecting trip with Major Colbaith and finding Angus there, she asked him, before you, when he was going to France. His reply was that he would take the same train that you did. Remember that?"

"No, I don't!" snapped Howard.

Colonel Johnson raised his eyebrows. "And you don't recall that Miss Devonsher said pleadingly, 'Angus, I'd give my right hand to be able to persuade you and Howard to do your duty!' And you don't recall that Angus laughed and replied, 'It's not your *right hand* I want, Eve!' and that Miss Devonsher at the insult seemed about to strike Angus but that you interfered, saying that you'd attend to his case; and that Eve left the room. Do you recall that you merely scolded Angus as you would an insolent schoolboy?"

But Howard was not to be caught twice. "Lee Fu has been lying again. I remember nothing."

"That is a pity," returned the colonel,

"for while your evidence might help to prove that from her point of view Eve Devonsher had to shoot Angus Duncan, it might also help to minimize her act in the eyes of the jury."

Eve saw on Howard's face that look of furious obstinacy it had worn during the wretched quarreling of the early spring. Yet his attitude seemed to please Colonel Johnson, for with a triumphant glance at Poindexter he dismissed the witness.

It was Mary Devonsher whom the lawyer for the defense next called to the stand. Eve clasped her hands in an agony of sympathy. But Mary walked to her place steadily enough. She wore an inconspicuous gray dress and a small black felt hat pulled low over her eyes. There was a flaming red spot on either thin cheek as she faced Jim Poindexter. Otherwise she showed no trace of excitement.

The lawyer at first stressed Mary's personal history. She had been born in a little town in New Hampshire in the house built by her great-grandfather, who had been captain and part owner of an East India merchantman.

"The house," said Mary, glad to give herself a background for the benefit of the pioneer crowd, "was full of china and rugs and teakwood carvings. There was a walled-in garden with a sundial and syringa bushes. And there were great elms before the doorstep."

"How did you come to leave so charming a spot, Mrs. Devonsher?" asked Jim.

"There were five girls in the family and a widowed mother. We had to earn our living and almost the only way permitted to women of our kind was school-teaching. I was restless and full of life. I thought as long as I was obliged to earn my living I'd like to do it in a way that would enable me to see the world. And so I applied for a position in California. Then I taught in Seattle and Cheyenne. In Cheyenne I met David Devonsher."

"What sort of a man was Dave at that time?"

"He looked very much like a masculine edition of Eve, today."

"I mean, Mrs. Devonsher, what was his mental and moral type?"

"I met Dave through a friend, a well-known politician who told me he was about to introduce me to one of the coming men

of Wyoming. I asked the friend what he meant and he told me that Dave was the son of a powerful Britisher who had preferred becoming a simple American to remaining a distinguished Englishman. He said no one could understand why Carter Devonsher had not gone into politics or why he had been unable to hang onto his enormous holdings in the Antelope Basin country. Perhaps, the friend said, because he was a great governing executive, was no reason he could be a successful rancher. Anyhow, Wyoming was looking for great things from Dave Devonsher."

Mary paused, staring at Jim reminiscently. Judge Jones sat eyeing her with a concentration he had given no other witness save Peter. Mary was choosing her words carefully. Hers was the task to make the jury see the Devonshers as she had seen them. If this could be done, Mary believed they would set Eve free. She went on slowly.

"I THOUGHT when I met Dave that he was the most fascinating human being in the world. He had just enough melancholy and self-suppression about him, as I saw it then, to intrigue a woman of my type. He was a fine horseman, and a famous hunter. We were married within a year after we met."

Judge Jones leaned forward. "Mrs. Devonsher, what was Dave doing at that time?"

"Breeding thoroughbred horses. He sold them through the Cheyenne markets."

"Was he mixed up in state or national politics?" asked Jones.

"No. He took no real interest in either. He was a great mixer, gambled and drank a good deal and had a natural gift for making friends of distinguished people. Wyoming was absolutely without a big figure at the time and the leaders, casting about, built hopes on Dave. The glamour of his father's name was his curse."

The judge nodded and glanced at Jim, who waited a moment for Mary to go on. Then he asked her abruptly:

"Why was Dave indifferent to politics?"

"He told me his father had taught him to be. He said that Carter Devonsher believed that serving one's country politically was the most futile work in the world. Governments were always thankless, he taught Dave, thankless and senselessly

vindictive. While Dave outgrew this early teaching, as he showed by going to the Spanish-American War, he never had what I considered a normal attitude toward his country. He lashed himself into a morbid state of devotion when the war came, telling me it was his chance to make up for his father's failures and his own failure to me. But Dave couldn't become a politician. His father had seen to that. And he couldn't have, anyhow. He couldn't take punishment well enough. A man must have the hide of a wolverene to succeed in American politics. Poor Dave was morbidly sensitive—"

Mrs. Sherman suddenly interrupted. "Don't talk as if that was anything against him, Mary Devonsher. That helped to make him one of the greatest trainers of horses this state will ever know!"

"Jane Sherman," exclaimed Mary, "I spent over ten years exaggerating every good point Dave Devonsher possessed to see if they wouldn't overbalance his weaknesses. Don't try to instruct me about him. I was married to the man. I bore him a child who is his living replica."

"Eve's got a whole lot of you in her, Mary, that you can't see. Some of her worse faults come from the sea-captain side!"

There was a laugh in which Mary joined faintly.

"Did Dave tell you any of the things Tom Maine divulged to us?" asked Jim.

Mary pushed her hat up from her eyes and took a long look at Eve, who returned the look steadily and with a little smile of encouragement. Then Mary turned to Jim and her lips trembled. "You wouldn't ask me questions that would hurt Eve, would you, Jim?"

"No, Mary. You'll see what I'm aiming at, in a moment."

"Well, then, I know all about what Tom Maine and Henry Worth and Sid Brownell think they know and much, much more. But Dave told me nothing. I will say, though, that he never lied to me as to the truth of such things as I put up to him."

"From whom did you learn these alleged facts?"

"Mrs. Brownell began the job. You see, I was a rank outsider. I am still, though I've lived here thirty years; just as Willy Jones is, although he's been here for so long. Neither of us was born on Antelope Basin Plaza. Things might have gone



Mary said in a low voice: "It shall be as you wish, Eve. If they sentence you to Rawlins, you need never go."

better, if I hadn't been so homesick at first. At that time there were only the families here in the Basin that Carter had brought here. It seemed to me as if we were like a handful of chessmen thrown down in the wastes of Sahara!"

She moistened her lips and glanced again at Eve. "Oh, I recognized the extraordinary beauty of the country, but that itself made me sicker for home. Why, Jim, I'd have exchanged Flaming Lake and all the Sioux mountains that surround it, for just our walled-in garden, with the sundial and the syringas. Night after night I used to put myself to sleep picturing every individual bush in that garden. And then the women began to pick on me.

"We lived in the tavern with Carter Devonsher. It was not a tavern then. And we lived with considerable formality for these parts. Carter had his body servant and there were always two or three Chinamen for the housework and serving the meals. It seems that this was quite all right for the real Devonshers but not for an interloper like me. I'd been married about six months when all of the Chinamen fell ill at once of some kind of poisoning. They didn't die, but they were sick for two weeks and I went over to the Brownells to see if Mrs. Brownell would help me with the work. She had been married only a month or so. The Brownells lived in what was then called the Servants' Hall. It's now Henry's Place. The Duncans lived in what was called the Lodge. It's the jail here.

"WELL, Mrs. Brownell was sitting in her kitchen, reading, with the dishes unwashed and the big feather bed in the corner unmade. It didn't look hopeful, but I was desperate. So I asked her to help me.

"She was pretty in a cattish kind of way. She looked up from her book and raised her eyebrows. 'I am not a servant,' she said, 'no matter what my husband is.'

"I don't ask you to come as a servant,' I answered, 'but just as a neighborly act.'

"'Neighborly!' she said. 'You and your Boston airs! What do you know about being neighborly? We Oregon Trail folks are the only real neighbors in the world!'

"Then come and help me serve the governor his meals as he likes them,' I said, swallowing hard.

"Do you think I'll come and help as a

servant when I'd have every right to rule as mistress if you hadn't stolen Dave with your Boston hussy ways!'

"What do you mean by that?' I asked.

"Ask Dave what I mean and see if he dares to tell you.'

"Perhaps I'd better ask your husband,' I came back at her.

"Ask him! He's nothing but a fat booby. He'll just stand and sing 'The Oregon Trail' to you.'

"I left her and I've never been inside her door since. And I'll say right here that Oregon Trail boasting and reminiscencing has made me sick at my stomach ever since. I went straight to Dave. He was in the corral with his horses. He came to the gate the instant he saw me. He was panting but he had breath for his particular smile. He was a very fine-looking man—"

Mary paused, her eyes on that which no one in the courtroom could see. But clearly as though actually before her she beheld the slender, delicate girl with wistful face turned toward the handsome, still mysterious young rancher.

"I told him what Mrs. Brownell had said. I had to, Jim, for my own peace of mind. I came of a Puritan household, God help me! Dave set his teeth hard, looked at me as though he wanted to say something and wouldn't let himself, then without a word he leaped over the fence and headed toward the Brownells' house. I never saw such anger on a man's face before. Heaven knows, I saw it frequently enough in the next few years. Though I want to say right here that the grip that Dave Devonsher got on himself by the time we'd been married five years was wonderful."

"My God, Mary, didn't you ever let him let go?" demanded Mrs. Sherman. "No wonder he went loco!"

Mary appeared not to have heard the interruption. "What happened in the interview between Dave and Mrs. Brownell, I don't know. But from that day to this, Jane Worth Brownell, as she calls herself, has been my implacable enemy!"

"Did you try to placate her, Mary?" asked Jim.

Mary's mouth closed with a snap. "No!" she replied.

"And when did Mrs. Brownell begin to give you the alleged family information?"

"After Dave died."

"Did she leave you alone until that time?"

"Yes."

"Do you mean by that that she didn't come to the tavern?"

"You must remember that it was not the tavern then but the Devonsher ranch-house where the old governor ruled with a rod of iron. He had a particular dislike for Mrs. Brownell and any other connections of the Worth tribe."

"How did you get on with Carter Devonsher, Mary?" asked Judge Jones.

"Very well. I understand the type. My own father was just such an arrogant, bitter-tongued old aristocrat."

Jim smiled. "Strange epithets to apply to an American, Mary."

"Not at all. His grandfather was a Sussex man. The breed runs to certain forms wherever it may migrate."

Peter glanced at Eve with a little nod. Jim Poindexter ran his fingers through his white hair, and considered his next question carefully before propounding it.

"Did Carter Devonsher ever speak to you of his relationship to Sir John Colbaith?"

"Just once. He was very much excited over Eve's birth. At first he was tremendously disappointed that she was not a boy; but one day, when Eve was about a month old, he was watching her in her crib and he turned to me with a queer pale look about the mouth. 'She looks like my wife! Hanged if the little wench hasn't the very face of my wife!' And from that moment until he died, six months later, he was devotion itself to the baby. About a month before he dropped dead he was sitting by the window watching Eve in my lap.

"'Mary,' he said, 'I made a mistake in training David. Bring this child up with the idea that she must make restitution for all that we've failed to do. Teach her to give our self-respect back to us.'"

"'Governor'—I remember how appalled I was—'how can I do that? The baby is all Devonsher, even now.'

"This made him angry. 'What do you mean by that?' he roared at me.

"But he never frightened me. I remembered my own father too vividly. 'I mean I can't train the weak traits out of her if they are born in her.'

Envy, hatred, blackmail, generally easy morals—could there have been any better background for the murder of Angus Duncan? The next instalment of "The Devonshers" will be in August EVERYBODY'S, out July 15.

"'And what are the weak traits of our family, madam?'

"'Arrogance. Lack of self-control. Selfishness.'

"**H**E OUGHT to have roared back at me. But he didn't. He leaned his splendid old white head against the window-sill and stared at the baby for a long time before he said: 'So, if she inherits these traits, you think she has no chance. I wonder if you are right! Mary, when this child is grown, if she has no brother, I want you to tell her that a certain Sir John Colbaith wrecked our family. Tell her I want her to go to England and see to it that the truth is told in the proper quarters.'

"'Why haven't you put that task on Dave's shoulders?' I asked.

"'David! David! Why, David thinks I was wrong!'

"'What did you do, governor?' I asked.

"'I shall tell you the story as soon as I gather myself together,' he told me. 'I must feel better than I do now. It will be a hard matter to tell to one who doesn't know the old Oregon Trail conditions.'

"And that was as close as I ever got to the story from him. He grew feeble mentally almost at once and a month later we found him dead, up there on the edge of the cedar grove. He might have been going over that old duel Tom Maine told us of, and even the memory of it was too much for his poor old heart. Doc Peabody was right. He was a tortured old man. That was all I knew of intimate family matters until Mrs. Brownell came to me after Dave's death. I was feeding the chickens out by the corral fence when she came up with a great show of sorrow.

"'I shall never get over this!' she said. 'You will never know what Dave was, before you married him. He might have been something beside a horse thief, if you hadn't henpecked all the decent ambition out of him.'

"'I ordered her off the place but for a moment she didn't stir. 'Don't be so highy-tighty!' she said. 'Everybody knows you're living off of stolen money. But I know something that beats that. The old governor stole all this land around here from the Hudson's Bay Company.'"

God-Horses

*Two Children of Nature and One of Civilization's
Rotters—Love and Adventure in Tropical Barbados*

By Phoebe O'Neill Faris

Illustration by Stockton Mulford

YOU no doubt have heard them called walking-sticks, but in the "right little tight little tropic island of Barbados" they are god-horses. Harmless, frail, futile, the god-horse is the oddest of insects. Sitting for hours astride a small limb, or hunkering down to the bark of the tree trunk, he is altogether hidden from your curious eyes; moving an inch a day he is like a weakly animated twig, brown, dry, pathetic. He never seems to do anything, to eat, or prey, or fight; watch him for an hour and he is going nowhere. He does not sting or bite, is never stung or bitten. Because he would be no better eating than a straw, he has no fear of spider, hawk, nor vibrating serpent's tongue. His protection is his unalterable resemblance to a twig, and he knows one thing well—that he is absolutely safe, hunkered to the bark of a Barbadian cherry tree.

I picked him from off an exotically blooming limb—he reached from the tip of my longest finger to the bend of my wrist—and observed him carefully. He was young, his "bark" that delicate shade between glaucous green and fallow, his six grass-like legs pale and unsturdy, but he was stiff and awkward; he displayed none of the verve of other youthful creatures. I looked on in pity as, in a paroxysm of fright, he crumpled to pieces in my hand.

Larry Jones was dubbed God-Horse by an impudent nigger when he was but twelve years old, and as through the leisurely passing years he grew ever more lank, and more of a village oddity, the by-name stuck.

When a dozen or so added years had passed by, and he had grown into a not altogether unprepossessing appearing "young fellah"—though he never lost the rangy, stretched-out, hunkering-down look—he resembled in some other ways more than in appearance the elongated insect of the cherry tree.

He was futile, his spirit crumpled and frail. In tiny Barbados, overdeveloped, overpopulated, twenty-by-ten island, where there is no faintest future for the most ambitious youth, Larry Jones most certainly had no future. Nor had he really a "present," for he did nothing, nor had he the least intention of doing anything.

Five more tropic years slid by, and his father, the very English old "Kunnel" Jones, died. Then was God-Horse—for as such was he known by all his small community—left entirely alone. Already was his hair graying, his shoulders stooped a trifle, and still he had not the shadow of a future before him.

Was any one surprised or even interested, I wonder, when, after the passing of that year's rainy season, God-Horse retired without fidge or ado to the one lonely beach on the whole overstuffed island? Most probably not, as a futile individual is always overlooked after he has passed that age when, the object of pitiless criticisms from the proud parents of his sturdy, upstanding, ambitious young associates, he is formed into one or another of the particular kinds of hermit that fit his environment.

And so this is not a tale of the "right little tight little island" after all; nor is it a

tale of the sea. It has to do with a misty, foam-sprayed, windward shore, uncanny spectral tropic nights when the sea burns with phosphorescence and all sounds echo like spirit voices; with silent gulls on spread wings soaring through wavering draperies of fog, uncertain and wan; with still, overheated air, and torrential rain blown from hard-edged, oily clouds that stand stationary above an indistinct horizon; with the arched square-sail of a phantom ship in the gleaming foam of white squalls—and Concha Lindgren, with spray-wet tresses, and Spanish eyes unwaveringly searching a wind-tumbled sea.

If there was one thing in the world that God-Horse Jones could do, it was swim. Like the hard-pushed land animal that takes to the sea, adjusts itself to watery conditions, and only comes up to breathe, the hermit of Windward Beach swam his shore waters to avoid being forced to perform the duties of the particular tribe into which he had been born thirty years before, back in the village. He swam for pleasure; it was his one way of having a good time. When he was tired he floated on his back. He dived through great curling waves in a sort of ecstasy of enjoyment, or, with long lazy strokes, pumped straight out to sea, fearing neither shark nor jagged reef-rock.

He is the one swimmer I have ever heard of who could go out for a wetting, trail a line over a certain protected reef-hole, and ride the waves in with a delectable young kingfish under one arm. Dangerous business too, in waters where thieving barracudas prowl.

But without running afoul a single barracuda, God-Horse lived his days in the waters of his Inlet, and his nights in his snug little storm-proof shack at the sea-edge of a cluster of coconut palms.

What he thought of, through all the long days and the burning exotic moon-nights, who could tell? It is safest to guess that the mirror of his shy, creep-mouse mind was but a confusion of idea shadows. His fuddled powers were drowned—at least submerged—in the purple waters of his Inlet, veiled by the mists of his shore.

So for two years he passed his time.

Then, one day, on a jagged point of his reef, he found riches: ambergris. He had no faintest knowledge of its value—this

mass, air-light, pale gray, with a faintly pungent smell. But he was curious, and he rolled shoreward with the waves, propelling it before him.

IT HAPPENED that night that God-Horse went up to the village for stores. (If he had a regret it was that he could not subsist in entirety on the fruit of the waters of his Inlet.) It happened also, that a visitor was in the village inn, drinking rum toddies and devouring in enormous gulps the pastry masterpieces of the inn's famous cook—an old whaler with a gray tumbled top and friendly eyes.

"C'm here, fellah, 'nd drink a double-tot o' rum!" he shouted at first sight of the funking, shrinking figure so elongated and wishing to hide.

And God-Horse directly found himself facing a cheerful companion across a small round table, and in less time than would seem reasonable if I told it, strangely humanized by a double tot o' rum.

"Been down Trinidad way—no place fer sailor men is that there port," boomed the old whaler. "Where y' live, boy? Y' smells o' the sea—"

"Found a fiddlin' funny lump o' sump-thin' in my watahs t'day," replied God-Horse.

"Sponges, young fellah?"

"Na, sah. Gray, like a cindah 'n' light 's mist."

The old whaler squinted his eyes in an expression keenly alert. Reaching a horny hand across the marble top of the table, he thumped the thin chest of God-Horse.

"Been any whalin' wash-tubs in your waters, fellah?"

"Na. Cain't no ships get into mah watahs." With the pride of the squatter he faintly emphasized the "my." Then, feeling embarrassment, he attempted to decry the importance of his find.

"Aw—'tis nothin'—just a lump o' sump-thin'!"

"Far t' yer waters, m' lad?" queried the old gray-top, and without waiting for a reply: "I'm goin' with you, m' gully. Lead on!"

All the way to Windward Inlet shore the old whaler, swinging along on his sea-legs with the stores strapped to his bulky shoulders, boomed his great voice in song.

"We were three sailors of Croix,
On board the *Saint François* . . ."

But when he saw the fiddling funny lump of something that God-Horse had found on the reef-rock of his Inlet, his old eyes almost popped from his head; and he became keen and haggling as a market harri-dan.

God-Horse, who by right of discovery and a fortunate flash of human curiosity, was the rightful owner of the queer mass of gray stuff, did not even conjecture as to why any living human creature should pay money for it; but "It's a fortune," muttered the whaler, and God-Horse also became shrewd.

"Ya-as," he agreed with a delightful nonchalance. "Funny never saw 't befoor, growing on tha rock-p'int." He pointed with a long finger.

"Yer wrong, me sea-bird." The whaler waxed scornfully eloquent. "That there lump's lit'rally from the belly o' the whale!—a pore sick sperm whale. Jonah'd rec'gnize it; but 'tis most unprob'ble he'd know uts value. Now you und me, we two c'n mak' two fortunes off it—"

"Two?" God-Horse was contemptuous. "Na. I'm keepin' it. Finders is keepers."

"Keepin' it! Why, y' mad-brain, it's wuth t'ousands—t'ousands, I tell ye! Listen, fellah! I'll sell 't, 'nd split y' halvers. Thar's a Noo York sea cap comes into Bridgetown'll tak' it und hi-lar-'ous to get it!"

And that was how it came about that soon there were two cabins instead of one on the sands of Windward Shore, that God-Horse Jones whistled softly to himself and often said to a gray gull skimming along the waves:

"Thousands, m' gully! I hopes to tell!"

For the ancient whaler, after disposing of the ambergris, "splitting halvers" with the finder as straight as his topsail mast, waddled away toward the eastern horizon line and out of this story. And God-Horse sat himself down to *keep* the (literally two) thousands in American gold-backs that his briny friend had dumped upon his cabin bunk with the warning:

"There, me goney! Now doan't tak' to Dawg-Rock Island rum; 's better up Saint Kitts way."

How news spreads! And waxes luxuriant! Particularly if there are those who wish to keep it secret.

Soon a schooner from nowhere put in at Speightstown, carrying Sand Lindgren, the burly Swede sharper who believed neither

in saints nor in God, nor in anything holy, but whose fear of a phantom lugger that he said "trailed him everywhar" was not pitiful nor ludicrous, but rather terrible.

With him was a slender Spanish girl with sloe eyes and a red scarf tight about her shining jet hair: Concha. She may have been the lawful wife of Lindgren, and she may not. Whether she was or wasn't does not in the least affect her story as it was written in the throwing, tumbling, witchlike fogs of Windward Beach.

She came in the first fogs of the rainy season and stayed two nights on a yellow dune drenched with warm mist. Then she went into the hut that the Swede had built and cooked his meals, hating him.

God-Horse watched from afar, his tongue against his cheek, his eyes squinted musingly. At night beside his slyly flickering lamp, listening to the wind which whistled by with a low and pensive sound, he pondered for the first time the relationship of man and woman.

And with an uncanny perception bred of voluntary aloneness, he sensed something wrong on his Inlet. Even his own quiet cabin did not seem the same safe, beautifully lonely refuge it had been. He looked from his doorway across the waters; a fantastic bundle of cloud rolling in was like a fiend coming on stormy tempest to claim his own. A great triangular light behind it reached halfway to the zenith—the zodiacal light which he had seen many, many times before. God-Horse looked, and stepped beneath his gables for the pole to bar his door, a thing he had not done for many a night.

THE Swede came thrashing through the sands, swaying drunkenly in the eerie light. He lurched close to God-Horse, clutched his clothes.

"Mon!" his harsh throat gasped. "Th' lugger! It's m' ghost-sail, mon!"

He was in a frightful state and kept lurching and cursing and pointing to the fleeting tricky silver triangle thrust now just above the inky line of the horizon.

"Bloody work, 'tis—the damned cursed thing!"

God-Horse shouted at him in the noise of the tempest that broke suddenly and with brazen chaos, with trip-hammers of tremendous thunder.

"If it's haunts yah fearin', I doan't believe in 'em any; but they do say and tell as thah's queah sights an' things yah cain't explain, sah—"

And then he stopped. In the ashy light the Swede was spectral himself. He was spotted with fright, like a man with some horrible crime on his soul.

"An' I ain't done no wrong, mon," he whined. "Only what any mon with red blood in his veins ud do—tak' his woman. Yet the cursed sail trails me—and her!" He thumbed in the direction of the black shape that was his own newly built cabin. Then he pulled a stone bottle from his belt, took a long draught, and was gone through the torrent of rain.

IN THE middle of the night God-Horse opened bewildered eyes to a stealthy face that flickered twice across the gray gloom of his open window; and the next day, one of those brilliant days that come between storms when the rainy season is not yet well begun, swimming in through the foam that the tempest had left, from the jagged points of his reef, he was aware of Lindgren on the sand, watching. Aware also that a close inspection was being made of the exterior details of his own neat habitation, which nestled just behind a dune in the palms; aware that beside the doorway of the other, the new-thatched hut but a stone's throw to the rocks, gleamed in the glaring sunshine a flash of red—the woman's skirt, and a yellow scarf on a line; aware of a tinkling, tender, bell-like music that she played on some strange flashing brass instruments, and that ceased suddenly when the Swede turned and cursed in a loud shouting bellow.

"Stop 'em!" he screamed. "A'ways, a'ways, a'ways ye do it!"

But he turned jocularly to the swimmer at that moment tossed at his feet by a careful wave which licked the luminous sands discreetly and receded with the undertow. There was a sly kind of friendliness in the glimmering slits of his eyes.

"Hoy, ye biped-fish!" he joked, and laughed loudly. "Ye swim like a sea-jinx, mon!"

"Swimmin's nothin', sah. It's the easiest thing ah c'n do, sah." Which further amused Lindgren to a louder, harsher laugh. But, as God-Horse slowly disentangled himself and

arose to his full ungainly height, jocosity ceased, and the Swede eyed him narrowly.

"Think I wuz rickety last night when th' gale blew, mon, did y'?"

As God-Horse said nothing, only stood stooped and gazing far off at some half-obiterated feature of the scape of his beach sands, he continued apologetically and with an unsteady quaver to the rasp of his voice:

"Its a wraith-sail that follows us—me and her." And, becoming voluble: "I took 'er from off a schooner in Samana Bay. Wuz a shuttle-witted old dame with 'er—'nd a sniffety priestlin' of a fellow—"

"What for, sah? What for did you take 'er?"

Lindgren was surprised at the pointed interrogation, and laughed foolishly before answering:

"They was comin' down th' bay in a blow, tryin' to tack toward me, 'nd I swung a boat. I wanted 'er when I saw 'er—and so did the priestlin'." He laughed again, a queer note, half bravado, half apprehension. "He was goin' to marry 'er when he was rid of his slinkin' black priest clothes. Priests! With their women an' their prayin'! Bah! She says he'll be takin' revenge. . . . Ha' ye ever a ghost-ship in yer waters, mon?"

God-Horse, looking squarely at him, saw a dampness wet his face. "Na, sah," he replied with faint arrogance, and continued philosophically, "Revenge, sah, 'nd envy, an' grudgin' spite, sah—they's only plagues for the mind—"

But the Swede's wide face was ashy-hued and his unsteady tones were harsher still. "But her"—his great hand was again thrust in the direction of the pied walls of unmatched palm strips that formed his hut—"but her, mon—it's her tha' says the ghost-sail comes for me; tha' it foretells a horror!"

He began thrashing about as on the night before when the tempest blew.

"Th' ghost-ship—the damned cursed sail!—comes in a white squall, mon! Her—it's her tha' says a spectral light'll mark my grave!"

God-Horse regarded him with as little emotion as the elongated insect of the village cherry tree might show toward a whipping, thrashing serpent tail.

"Why ya drift to mah Inlet, sah? Mean t' fish in mah watahs?" he queried calmly.

Lindgren brought himself together with a burly curse. Then conciliatingly and with gleaming eyes once more narrowed:



After one look into the squall, Lindgren wheeled and retreated. And then the cloud dropped lower. The evil-bird was blotted out in entirety.

"Whalin'. There's whales in these waters—"

"Na!" It came emphatically though softly spoken. "Wheah d'you mean to moor your jack, sah? Th' reef yondah's powahful jagged, sah." A sly twinkle showed in his lazy eyes, as Lindgren swung away toward his own cabin. "Mebba ya whales in th' ghost-ship, hows'evah, sah?" This last with artful satire.

But Lindgren surged onward across the glittering sand to the door of his cabin where Concha stood, her hand shading her vision, looking off to sea.

There was a flash of something new in the deep lazy eyes of God-Horse, as he dropped to the sand and stretched luxuriously. He always dried his swimming clothes so.

"He's as full of lies 's a pomegranate of seeds," he murmured to the uneasy feathery clouds that sailed the deep-blue bowl of the sky. "What's he mean he took 'er off a schooner, 'nd where's the schooner—'nd th' shuttle-witted old dame—and the priestlin' Spaniard that wanted her? And what's he talkin' about, revenge 'nd a wraith-ship?" He mused thus for a long while, counting lazy gulls that careened above in the still air. And at last, "What's he come to mah Inlet for?"

ALL night long the ragged half-moon drifted like a restless minor deity through clouds torn by jagged streaks of lightning. An uncanny wind whistled up and down the dunes carrying on its wings silvery tassels from shaken pods of harassed silk-cotton trees. Far out on the horizon, in the safety of bottom swells, two ships afraid of one another sang warnings, mellow and sweet. Out there a glitter on the water showed fair weather with a stiff gale; but over the Inlet waters, at chilly dawn, a slate-colored cornucopia cloud poured eery, smokelike mist. A cross-breeze, coursing under, whipped the waves to foam; there was a squall over Windward Shore.

Stepping from his cabin just as the fantastic dawn broke, God-Horse stood staring for long tense moments into the senseless confusion, the lines, flashes and rolling mists of the squall. Could it be! A four-masted schooner in the offing, the gray hulk outlined grotesquely by traceries of lightning, the half-furled sails of seemingly gossamer texture; and, when a golden stream

of sun's rays pierced the clouds, stark brilliance of hull and sail and silent rigging?

No, it couldn't be.

"Theah's no such things as ghost-ships," remarked the philosopher of the Inlet to his disturbed senses; "but theah's sights and things yah cain't explain—"

The schooner looked lonely and unmanned.

And could that be music, tinkling, sweet, piercing, coming on a puff of gale from the highest dune where a woman's red skirt whipped and flashed about her slender figure?

Walking with long strides, like the great heron of the marsh-lands, God-Horse plied his course in the direction of that highest dune. As he neared her she turned from the sea, to show him great dark eyes, elemental, electric, and cheeks whipped red by the gale. Just then the door of her cabin was flung open, and Lindgren, cursing and bellowing, rushed at her. But, after one look into the squall, he wheeled and, ashy-gray and cowering, retreated to the sagging uneven opening of his sheltering doorway.

She laughed a mad laugh.

And then the cloud dropped lower, a heavy veil touching the notched reef rock. The schooner was blotted out in entirety, and the storm was upon them. A sea-bird, hard-pressed and with portentous screams, fought the wind before vivid lightning flashes, reached the land and hovered over, shrieking.

On the dune the woman, laughing still but more quietly, pointed and said in a voice strangely rich and vibrant:

"The evil-bird."

Lindgren gave her no answer, only crouched in crazy fright beside his open door, as the storm came on, poured its flood into the Inlet, and shook and rattled the insecure walls of the cabin.

Retreating to his own domain, God-Horse prepared to house himself against the gale. One last look across the wet beach: and he never afterward forgot, throughout the musings of long misty years, the picture of that slender figure on the dune, poised as if to fly, wet face uplifted to the rain, and supplicating arms outstretched—toward the sea. The Swede had gone inside his cabin, closed his rough slab of a door. God-Horse could picture him crouched in terror of the dark, of the elements, of the woman and

her tinkling instruments, of his "ghos'-sail"—of the Lord knew what vengeance that pursued him.

It was the next day that he spoke to her. She had brought food, three small glistening silver-fish, to an ancient gray pelican, which, battered and broken by the storm, flopped on the wet sands in agonized effort to mount the upper air.

God-Horse rounded the dune and suddenly came upon her hovering and crooning like a mother to an adored hurt child. He stood still, disturbed. Was it the vermillion of her scarf that excited him?

But when she turned with a quick movement he spoke thus reassuringly and foolishly:

"I came along t' ask you how you do."

Her eyes were flashing today; her cheeks had the conch pearl's glow; there was a tremor of excitement on her red mouth.

"You! *Señor!* You walk your sands lak a god, your face in the clouds!"

After a sheepish moment the "god" replied, "Ah wouldn't be so bad if mah features were in fashion." And she laughed a lilting youthful laugh.

"I am Concha," came simply in friendly slurring tones, while her pitying eyes were on the old gray bird at her feet.

"His weeng?" She looked up appealingly. "Can you feex?"

"Ties 'nd splints might," he diagnosed briefly after stooping to examine the broken useless member. "I c'n carry him to your cabin—"

"No, *señor*—to yours! He, my mon, he not lak—he is bad mons. He keel."

"He seems t' me to be afraid o' most everything," God-Horse ventured as he fingered gently the drooped gray feathers.

Concha laughed scornfully, queerly.

"We weel tak' the bird, an' I help," she suggested, adding as an afterthought: "My mons, he at the veelage for theengs—"

At the cabin of God-Horse in the edge of the palms, Concha displayed a neighborly interest. It was a friendly visit, like that of two strange children newly acquainted. He showed her two broken door braces and the torn edge of his roof.

"Squall was bad, and queah. Most like a twistah. Howsoevah the schooner made out, it's beyond me t' say." He watched her eyes grow somber, fear blanch her cheeks, and felt wonder and an odd pity,

with a heat at his throat. Then he added with a quizzical gentleness: "Th' ghost-ship, I'm meanin'. But—'tisn't a ghost-ship, is it?"

"*Señor, sí!*" came quickly, almost shrilly. And then tears that wet her cheeks hotly.

"Because theah's no such things as haunts—" He watched her still—her breath coming fast, then slow, her hot fear subsiding. When she spoke her voice dropped again to its low vibrancy.

"THE ghos'-ship, eet cannot moor. It comes cruising for heem, thees devil-mon—Leendgreen." She pronounced the difficult name with slurring care.

"Cruisin' for him?" He looked up slowly, eyes narrowed, from the gray feathers where his long fingers worked with some skill. Her own hands held tightly the undamaged flapper and the enormous comical beak. She did her share as assistant in binding up the battered bird—but there was a look on her fair face that did not belong—bitterness, scorn, supercilious deceit. He felt embarrassment—and pity.

"I tell heem thees, an' he shak' and shiver, lak old gray pelican when we touch!"

God-Horse was troubled. He knew little of men and their affairs, and of a surety he had never seen such hate as this—such cruel, fierce woman-hate, such wildly bitter scorn. He had known of disagreement, wrangling, even broilings between men and the women who followed them as wives or otherwise—but there was ever the note of loyalty to the one who was outside, the stranger. And, although he knew so little of and cared less for the complexities of human harmonies—chose to live the life of a recluse rather than adjust himself to those harmonies—it seemed to sit incongruously, this odium, on so rare a spirit as shone from the Spanish girl's clear eyes. He was disturbed, yet he was curious.

"You-all—are whalin' folks?" he asked in the most natural sort of manner.

She laughed with real mirth this time, as though the idea were preposterous, that she belonged to "whalin' folks."

As she walked away from his cabin across the clean beaten sands, with a sort of lovely slowness to her tread, God-Horse remarked philosophically to his lately acquired charge, the ancient pelican, "Amazin' queah, they are." And later, from the vantage point of

his open window, as she rounded the dune that was a part of the picture he would not forget: "Her—she's like a white bird soarin' into the clouds; an' I stay on the ground watchin'—an' wantin' it."

THE next day the rain set in, in earnest. Do you know a tropical rainy season? Fast-flying clouds brooding low and lower to the hushed and apprehensive land, fretting the metallic sea to oily, turbid tremors; the voice of the storm-devil calling mockingly from the sullen horizon; offshore birds flying low and rapidly over dirty waters that toss and thrash in their abysmal channels as though trying to escape the coming foe. Squall and tempest, and eery sun's rays slanting through. And then rain, rain, rain!

Gray days and dripping nights when white mildews silently cover all things for the hands to touch.

Leaden dunes and two water-soaked cabins whose windows look out at each other through eternal tumbling mists. The grandeur of high seas!

Throughout the three weeks of almost steady downpour God-Horse was not once out of sight of his cabin. Twice he swam to the reef, the second time fighting his way back with difficulty. At the rock points the sea was seething, the pull of the underwaters terrific, the top-waves pounding, hurtling walls. He did not go out again, but often stood in the sands in the downpour watching the tumbling billows climb higher and higher onto the tortured dunes. This was as near as he came to impatience of the incessant rain; yet the eternal dripping irked him, the musty two rooms of his cabin bored, and the small tin cans with British and American factory labels offended his appetite.

Often he stood for long intervals looking out through his high window across the fog-enveloped beach at the indistinct shape of the other cabin. Once, during a brief slack to the rain, its door opened, and Concha slipped out to wander the sands like some restless spirit. When darkness closed down suddenly and ominously, and she had not returned, God-Horse hung an ancient sea-lantern beneath the gables of his doorway. In a windy hour there came a ghostlike knock, and she stood on his threshold like a beautiful witch-woman of the fog, her face

as white as the sea-foam itself, her drenched jet hair clinging to cheeks and neck.

"*Señor!* Eet is dark; I los' my way een the fog—"

He looked at her standing there beneath his lantern, and there were things he wanted to say, but they lay in his chest like misery. He struggled to speak but he had no words. He took her by the arm rather brusquely and led her on through the dark over the soaked sands to the other cabin, where the Swede sat with closed shutters and door, beside a faint candle and the inevitable stone bottle.

But it was two days later that he discovered why Lindgren had come to his Inlet.

There had been, at midday, a faint lift to the everlasting clouds, and the queer luster that gleamed on the sea told that the end of the rains was not many days off. God-Horse, in real need of foodstuffs, splashed up the drowned path to the village and back.

Late-afternoon mist was settling rapidly as he neared his cabin, so that, until he put out a hand to the latch, he did not realize that his door was already ajar. He moved warily and looked inside—stood so, silently, for a long interval while his eyes became accustomed to the dimness.

Lindgren was there prying. He was a new Lindgren to the man who peered in through the half-open door. The burly, heavy-footed Swede was gone; the great creature with spotted, frightened face and cowering, shaking limbs who whined through white squalls and at the sound of tinkling music, was not here. This was a cunning Lindgren, soft-footed and quick, adroit in the fine art of rifling. His breathing came a trifle heavily, and, emanating as it did from the gloom of the cabin, gave the impression of sighing.

God-Horse watched him interestedly.

Evidently he had searched a long time, for he was growing impatient. He cursed in a throaty whisper as he ransacked the neat cot; clenched his fists and cursed again when the chest beneath the window yielded up only musty clothing and a marvelous collection of delicately tinted sea-shells. Thrusting a hand and thick arm into a cupboard cleverly built in the wall, he felt about for a long moment, moistening his lips the while, and feeling along the window ledge with his free hand. Disappointment

again. He cursed this time with a note of frenzy.

One place he had missed, or perhaps he had left it for the last as the most improbable. For who would choose to keep a fortune in a black iron box on a high shelf in plain view of a doorway? Lindgren stretched his thick body and barely reached with his stubby fingers the shelf that was easy for the elongated owner of the black box and the "fortune" it contained.

The door creaked rather violently and something dropped with a thud, something that the Swede's fingers touched in groping to reach the box. It was in truth a week-old mango which had lain there overlong to ripen.

"Buttah-fingers!" God-Horse remarked in soft-voiced disdain.

Inside the cabin he faced the Swede with a mild sort of wrath.

"What y' lookin' for in mah house, y' ghost-gazer? That there box's got mah money in it, 'nd 't isn't for you-all. I keep it theah because it's handy, sah; but 't isn't for mah friends, sah—or mah neighbors! Yah bettah go whalin' in yah ghost-ship, sah, now the rains are settlin'."

But strangely enough, Lindgren stood before him with no answer, without moving, bathed in a sudden cold sweat of agony, like the poor victim of some diabolical medieval torture. His muscles lost their furtive quickness and he became hunched and broken. His face, through the strange half-light of the cabin, was, as in that dawn three weeks ago when the schooner appeared in the squall, spotted and ashy with fright.

God-Horse, peering closely into his face, lost what mild anger he had felt, and became curious.

"What's mattah with you, sah?" he queried. "Sick? Want a gig o' rum?"

But the Swede slunk toward the doorway, stumbling over a tin case of store supplies, and out into the fast-falling darkness.

"Queah!" murmured God-Horse, left alone. And then, "So it's mah money he's come for."

He took the black box from its shelf and carefully counted the exactly ninety-five twenty-dollar gold-backs that were tied in a neat bundle. It was all there, the entire fortune, minus only the one-hundred dollars he had given to a broken-hearted, curly-headed fisher boy who had wrecked his new

barkantine on the very reef point that had yielded the ambergris.

That night was a night, I tell you! Wild and uncanny as a witches' jamboree! The clouds were savage shapes, coursing like furies over the sky; the wind, cataclysmic, hurtling, beat the shore waters to froth. Far up beyond the clouds, in the infinite, indifferent heavens, at times there gleamed one previsive star, cruelly splendid.

GOD-HORSE did some spying on his own account. Knowing well that this was likely to be the last dark night (for it had come to the time of another half-moon, and the rains were breaking), he determined to use what night was left, frightful and hazardous though it be.

He prowled the shore, skulked through the palm grove, and eavesdropped beneath the window of Lindgren's cabin. He heard wild talk between the two, the Swede and Spanish Concha; cruel, desperate words in the woman's clear voice, and threatening bravado from the man.

"I, Concha—I weel go tell him why you come—beeg devil-beast—to steal hees monee. He is good mons—would not kill an' steal lak you." She spoke softly, almost sweetly, and the listener with difficulty willed his hearing away from the tempestuous wind to center it upon the muffled words. The Swede's rasping reply was not so difficult.

"Ha! How y' do it when I keep y' locked up? It's what a woman's fer—to be kep' locked up somewhar, specially 'f thar's a good-lookin' 'god-horse' close by like him." He laughed jeeringly.

"I weel scream eet above the tempest—the warning, that you come to steal hees mon-ee—"

"Easy t' shut y' up," came snarlingly.

"No so easee, beeg Señor Leend-green. I shak' the music, an' the ghos'-ship come for you! You! *Diablo!*" A sobbing hysteria slipped into her voice. "*Diablo! Mi madre!* You watch the ship sink, an' you no try to help her! You tak' me from my lover!" Her voice rose to a desperate cry. "An' I—what can I do?"

There was no more talking, only a scoffing laugh from the Swede that was evidently smothered in a draught from the stone bottle. For a guzzling sound came and much smacking of lips.

God-Horse went to his own dark cabin. He did not need a light and would not have made one had he needed it. He knew every square inch of his floor, walls, and beach sands, every breath of his airy moon-nights, and every frond of his palm trees that thrashed through the gales of his tempests.

He took the black iron box and put it in another, larger, thicker, air and water tight. Then he went out and entered without faltering the tumbling black water of the Inlet. Who but a fearless, erratic, adventurous spirit? And they had called him futile, marked him with a trivial name!

But, as he knew the minutest area of his shore, so did he know every shoal, reef rock and pebble of the Inlet waters.

When, half an hour later he lay on the sands just out of reach of the pounding waves, he was spent—and satisfied. He had lashed his iron chest to a rock point as indestructible as the ages; and for the lashing he had used wire cable which no wave could wear. A perfect cache for his "fortune," such a one as had not been thought of all up and down the island since far-gone buccaneering days.

ANOTHER day of uneasy watching across the sands; but no sight of Concha or the Swede.

What was happening behind those pied walls? How far had their taunting carried them along the weary road of hate? Was Lindgren, already mottled and jumpy with rum, perhaps stupefied? If so how did he keep her within? When would the schooner appear again? For God-Horse knew it was no ghost-ship. When again dare the dangerous reef to slip near to the flashing, tinkling music of Concha? And what would happen then?

Toward evening there came the slanting hot rays of the western sun, and the heavy clouds seemed to melt away in rose-pearl magic. Magnificent seas rode in, topped with fiery mantles of spray. The deafening roar of the sea drowned all other sound.

God-Horse sat in his cabin, waiting for he knew not what.

In the eery sunset hour his latch was lifted, the door swung in slowly and stealthily, and Concha stood before him. It came over him that it was she he had waited for, and that she was only late in coming.

Her white lips were drawn with pain, her

eyes dull and spent. There was a despairing weariness to the droop of her slender figure.

"I try to keel him with fright; an' he only drink—drink—an' laugh." Her voice was dull and tired like the look from her eyes.

God-Horse got himself up from where he had sat so long waiting. He moved toward her stiffly.

"What you meanin', Concha?" he asked gently, his tones as soft as a pensive night wind.

"Thees Leend-green, he very bad mons. He lie, an' cheat, an' steal. He come for your mon-ee." She raised her black lashes to look up into his face, and he saw how tears had gathered in her eyes. "I come to tell you while he sleep with much drink. He weel kill you to tak' your mon-ee. I come tell you because you are good mons—lak a god walking your sands I theenk of you. He want only mon-ee, an' he weel kill for it. *Señor—señor—*" Her voice trailed away in an unspoken question.

"Mah money! Ah am thinkin' he won't get it if he does make out to kill me for it. Howsoevah—Concha, howsoevah did he come t' be your man? Concha?" There was a sort of pain in the query, and a real human curiosity besides.

"He tak' me from my lover," she replied readily, trustingly, as though some instinct told her that here was a true and deep sympathy. "But that was no so bad." She tossed her black head in a gesture truly Spanish. "Every mon he tak' hees woman he love, he fight for her; but—" Once again she raised her eyes, for a moment like darkened furious shadows. "But *mi madre*—she was on the schooner that sink, an' he watch an' do nothing to help! *Madre de mial!*" She wept for a time, short sobs that shook her slender figure.

God-Horse felt an agonized helplessness during this interval of misery.

When she again lifted her face to his, however, there was only hate, burning Spanish hate that wounds or kills and exults in the killing.

"But he fear the ghos'-ship, an' I keel him yet, *señor*—with fright!"

She laughed the old wild laugh, seeming on the instant to recover a buoyancy of spirit. "When I shak' the music he tremble and dither lak any fool! He theenk I seeg-nal the ghos'-schooner to come for

heem! You think it funny, Señor Horse-of-the-Gods? It will come again, my schooner, an' then—"

She was gone across the sands while he stood wondering and pitying.

But an hour later, when the moon shone on the clean glistening desolation of the shore and brightened the waters to exotic, tumultuous silver, and a scream, high, javelin-like, woman-sharp, pierced above the sea-roar, he went hurrying along the same path that she had taken to the other cabin.

The door was open, yawning black without a light. The place was silent, and he half turned away to search the grove; then on second thought, a queer irrelevant thought that came from nowhere, he deliberately retraced his steps to his own cabin for a light.

Returning, he held high over his head in Lindgren's cabin, a yellow flickering lamp.

The Swede was nowhere about; but Concha lay on the floor, face turned upward, a cruel heavy mark across temple and cheek. Setting his lamp on the floor he stooped and lifted her, all the while feeling a strange and unnatural rage, something he had never felt before—and he was not made for wrath. But it swept over his senses and engulfed him like a torrential rain. His breath came fast with strangling force, then slow and clutching at his throat. Secret springs of action which had lain beneath the surface of his triviality seemed bursting into being. A sort of ecstatic riot ran through his veins. Yet it had come with such a rush—this burning desire to revenge the cruel mark on the white face of Concha, her terrified screams, the look of nervous hate in her black eyes—that it choked him. Yet again, he knew now what was this revenge—this revenge that he called in his hermit's philosophy "a plague for the mind."

With an ineffable tenderness he touched the bruised cheek. Concha opened her eyes to look long and steadily at him.

"Ah'll go find the ghost-gazin' brute an' kill him for you, Concha," he whispered through his choking anger.

"No—I, Concha— Eet is nothing! He has only punish' me for telling you—my Horse-of-the-Gods—that he come to steal. An' because I shak' the music!" She put a hand to her face and laughed an amazing rueful little laugh.

"How's he know you came an' told me?" he asked, standing erect as she sprang to her feet with ease. Amazing, she was, with no cringes or fears; only that unquenchable buoyancy!

"I tell heem. It mak' him mad lak devil." She moved to the doorway and looked out at the splendid silver sea. "Soon it come, my schooner," he heard her murmur as he moved past her and out to where the din of the waves overwhelmed all other sound.

God-Horse now knew his first burning wrath, and a longing to meet the Swede while this anger was still upon him. He did not give a thought to his money which Lindgren had come for; no such thing could have so aroused his lazy ire; but the mark on Concha's white face that distorted and marred, her small crumpled figure on the floor of the cabin, the hurt fury in her deep dark eyes, these called to an ancient chivalry within him, and something more.

ALL night he searched for Lindgren. And the tempest grew within him as he searched. It was a wearying debauch for his gentle soul, like the bacchanalia of the holy hermit of the forest who has seen his beloved shrine the victim of blasphemy.

Up and down the shore he went, through the palms, on and on into the cane on the north, and circling the rocks to the south. Then, cannily considering, toward morning he took the inland path to the village. Along the street of silent white houses he stalked, into the factory quarter where the heavy smell of molasses filled his nostrils, and the squeal of mules startled his taut nerves; into the negro section, stumbling over baskets and coconut hulls, and once almost colliding with a stray black goat. But the place was asleep; even the black watchman at the factory entrance slumbered, his musket across his knees, his great head rolled sidewise. Not a light shone, not a creature stirred. An ancient beggar woman was sleeping on the door-sill of a shop.

God-Horse started back to the Inlet shore. Hurrying feverishly, he felt no desire now to find the Swede; he had walked much of his wrath away. But he thought of Concha, alone in the hut, of things that might happen.

Dawn came with bars of flaming color over the sea. But, from the north-to-the-east, on the morning wind, there rolled a

black cloud with an edge of gold—the last squall of the rains. Emerging from the palms with a straight view to the sea, God-Horse stood stiffly still, and looked.

A sheet of rain came perpendicularly down over his Inlet, and behind it, very close to the reef rock, was the schooner, riding the tossing waves easily, more like a fairy ship behind its veil of glistening silver water than a lost soul-bearer of the deep.

He went forward, lurching a bit drunkenly, around the dune and down to the water's edge. His heart leaped, and settled to steadiness, as he turned to the high dune on which Concha had stood on the day when the schooner first appeared.

She was there, poised again as a bright-colored bird, gazing through the rain at the schooner. And there was music in the air as at that other dawn, but this time it came from the ship, a low, sweet blast from some mellow horn. Could it be any fool would try to make port through those shore waters and over the treacherous reef?

For a time the attention of the watcher at the water's edge was on the ship. When he turned again to the dune, Concha was not there, the hummock crest was bare and desolate. Affrighted into action, God-Horse rounded its base.

She had gone into the sea; was swimming the dark trough between two monstrous waves with a splendid strong stroke, her black head just above the surface.

A great wave came battering her, but she righted herself and stroked furiously on, fighting the push of the water to thrust her back onto the hated dunes. A second wave grew to a green wall of water, came on and gathered her to itself, whirled her over and down.

Then did God-Horse without thought or parley follow her.

He dived far beneath the battering surface waves, came up face inland, righted himself, and swam seaward. The one look, however, had shown him the Swede in the door of his own cabin, ashy-faced, one arm thrown up, staring out to sea where the schooner rocked beyond the curtain of rain.

When he found her Concha was struggling frantically, but she still had her reckless wits about her; for when he would have guided her shoreward, she repelled him even in the fury of a pounding wave, and sprang through the hollow between seas on

toward the reef and the schooner. But the next sea battered her strength away. With a gray smile of resignation, she gave in to the tormenting waters, to the will of the Fates, to the man who had come to rescue her.

But—God-Horse grasped her hand, and with a mad ecstasy in his heart, led her under water, to the reef opening that he alone knew—and through. He knew what she desired, above life and all things else—to pass the reef and reach the schooner! That she had dared the hurricane sea in one last desperate endeavor. And there was magic for him in his part; it was like losing his life and finding it again.

Beyond the reef, and the hungry waters of the Inlet! What a triumph! The great ocean swells cradling them! They were sighted from the schooner; a boat was put off and came rocking toward them!

"Thou—my Horse-of-the-Gods!" Concha called in her vibrant voice, happiness in her black eyes. Then the boat was alongside.

A tall man with a black cloak on his arm stood up in the prow and spoke in a slow deep voice.

"*Concha mīal* Now have I all I desire!"

"*Adorabla mīal*" she gave him back as she lifted her arms to him.

THE way shoreward was weary. For three hours he lay on the sand without the count of time. When, still almost heart-broken with fatigue, he arose and looked out to sea, the schooner had vanished; drawn up her anchor and slipped away, far from the dangerous reef, to sail the enchanted seas.

At the door of his own cabin God-Horse found the Swede. He was but the ashes of a man, ludicrously crumpled in a sitting posture, mouth open and eyes staring. But he was gone—far from such frail obsessions as phantom ships.

God-Horse lifted him to his cot, closed the staring eyes and folded the thick hands. Then he opened wide the windows and door that there might be no impediment to the flight of the soul.

"Turn 'im lose," he murmured. "Bettah for him, for her—an' we-all."

Then wearily he took the inland trail to the village, musing as he stalked along:

"Nevah thought I'd be fetchin' 'em to look after him; but theah's things you cain't explain, sah."

Roast Chicken

*The Surprise That Came to an Amiable Gentleman
Who Thought the World Owed Him an Easy Living*

By Alexander Winslow

MR. WILMOT RISLEY was unhappy. He had been living on the Italian Riviera more than a year, in a pension kept by a grim English spinster, who fed her guests on spaghetti, small Mediterranean fish, vegetable messes stewed in oil, and on Sundays thin, superannuated Italian cocks. This had been the ruin of Mr. Risley. He was a gastronome with a mania for roast pullet. Three years before, he had lost the remainder of his fortune at Monte Carlo; his chest was weak, and his elder brother, a successful mill-owner, had given him exactly two hundred pounds on which to live at San Remo for a year. That two hundred was gone, on wine, roast chicken and their accompaniments, all but one hundred and fifty lire, and his bill was in arrears. The lunch he had just eaten was obviously intended as an intimation that it was not to remain so. It had left a yawning void in his inside, while his palate, trained on caviar, crêpe surettes, and lobster à l'américaine, was suffering from shock.

He went miserably out along the narrow, romantic Italian main street, looking at the shops. Pâté, truffles, brawn and turkey; worst of all, fat chickens. The thought of the various ways in which these could be cooked made his mouth water so much that, with a groan, he went into the most expensive café in the place, and ate four anchovy sandwiches.

At the table next to him was seated a young English couple, drinking cocktails. Mr. Risley, who was a connoisseur of many things, noticed that the girl's frock looked like Callot, and that her small, exquisite wrist-watch might have come from Cartier;

also that her husband patronized a better tailor than he, even in his prosperous days, had been able to discover. They were young, gay, rich and in love. Mr. Risley was middle-aged, sad, poor, bald, undernourished and a bachelor. It exasperated him to hear the young man say: "Look here, sweetheart, we really ought to lunch cheaply, after spending all this on drinks."

The girl wrinkled up her nose. "I suppose we ought to," she said.

Cocktails, as Mr. Risley knew, cost six lire each—in English money, a shilling.

"That means a honeymoon," he thought. "They can't have less than £2000 a year."

He had spent four of his own precious lire on sandwiches. He paid, left the café, and wandered miserably by the blue, unruffled sea, on which the fishing fleet perched like settling gulls, and wondered if there were any truth in the theory that drowning was not unpleasant. In his mind there was a sharp picture of a beautiful laughing girl and boy, lunching, probably at the Imperiale, for ten lire less than they would have paid at the Casino.

At tea-time, still very dubious about the charms of drowning, and convinced that it would be bad for his chest to experiment, he came back to the pension. In the garden the expensive English honeymoon couple were having tea. Miss Pringle, the proprietress, was talking to them in her high, uncompromising voice. Their toast, he noticed, was not the usual gray roll, hacked into bits and smoked over charcoal, but made of the best, most expensive white bread. With the cunning of a greedy school-boy, he sat where they could see him, and ordered tea. Evidently Miss Pringle was

trying to impress them with the excellence of her food. She scowled at him, but he got his toast.

After tea, the young man spoke to him.

"What sort of a place is this to stay in, do you know?" he asked.

Mr. Risley did, but his wits were sharpened by adversity. If they stayed, the standard of the cooking would certainly improve for a week or two; furthermore, he might make friends with them and be invited to a few meals on a more expensive scale. Besides, the young man was mean and deserved to suffer for it.

"Not bad," he said, "as these places go. I've been here for a year. I always find, in the long run, that English pensions are more reliable than the native variety."

"Is it reasonably cheap?" asked the girl.

"Twenty-five lire a day, and the taxes in proportion," said Mr. Risley. "Allow me to introduce myself. I am Mr. Wilmot Risley."

"OUR name is Snookes," said the young man cheerfully. "I say, Camilla, I'm tired of tea. Let's have a cocktail. Will you join us, Mr. Risley?"

Mr. Risley would. "I can conscientiously recommend the cocktails," he said. "I taught Luigi myself. Have you been here long, Mrs. Snookes?"

"No," she replied. "We've just come from Paris. We can't make up our minds whether to stay here or at Bordighera, which is more beautiful but looks dull."

"San Remo is amusing enough, if you know where to look for it," said Mr. Risley, who had eaten and played games of chance and skill in every establishment in the place. "There are all sorts of queer people about, too, and they still gamble at the Casino, in spite of Mr. Mussolini."

"Then I think San Remo has it, Mouse," said Snookes to his wife. "Let's go and look at one or two more places before we settle on this one."

Mr. Risley did a daring thing. He asked them to have another cocktail. It was a highly precarious sprat to catch a very doubtful whale, but it came off. Miss Pringle made a furious note in her account-book, but sent Luigi out with Mr. Risley's order, who was watching Snookes pay his share of the bill from a pocketbook full of Bank of England notes.

That evening they returned, and after dinner invited Mr. Risley to sit with them. They were an extremely friendly and amusing couple, and talked about places and things, the Savoy and the latest jazz, in a way which, more than ever, convinced Mr. Risley that they must be rich.

On the third evening of their stay they told him that they were going to the Casino, and invited him to dine with them first. Mr. Risley, in spite of the improved cooking, was still being skilfully undernourished by Miss Pringle. Under the influence of roast chicken and the better part of a pint of Burgundy provided by his new friends, he became expansive, and invited his companions to repeat the experience and dine with him on the following night.

The rest of the evening was a nightmare to him. He had a hundred and four lire left, barely enough to pay for the dinner. The boy and girl, who had accepted joyfully, insisted on his coming with them to the Kursaal, and plied him with his favorite sweet Italian liqueur.

He watched them dance, their bodies united in ecstasy, their feet making intricate, and apparently improvised, patterns, their young faces unutterably serious, while the band played soft Italian dance tunes. He wondered if he could tell them his troubles; but three years of poverty had taught him that it was the one vice to which people really objected. It would be a gesture, of course, he meditated, to spend his last lire on standing two rich people a superfluous dinner, and his brother might send him cash to pay the bill and return to England; if he did not, it would have to be the sea, after all. They danced suddenly and swiftly up to him, with laughing faces.

"Don't look so miserable, Mr. Risley," said Camilla. "Come and dance with me. I'm sure you can. Charles, more drinks."

"I couldn't, really I couldn't. I haven't danced for twenty years, Mrs. Snookes," he said, trying to keep the tears out of his eyes.

She looked at him with an appealing, mischievous smile, and held out her hands. "We can do the old-fashioned waltz."

Mr. Risley half rose, and sat down again.

"I can't, really I can't," he said, while the band struck up a tune to which the words "one hundred and four" adapted themselves to admiration.

Camilla sat down. "I'm sorry," she said. "If people danced more, there would be much less unhappiness in the world."

SUDDENLY Mr. Risley's depression changed to anger. What right had this young, gay, lovely thing to try to dance him out of his troubles? What he wanted was a ten-pound note. By the time they were back in the pension, he had almost convinced himself that it was his due. When they got back to the pension Charles Snookes took off his overcoat and flung it over the back of a dining-room chair, and Mr. Risley remembered that, though he had taken his note-case from the pocket of his dinner-jacket at the Casino and left it on the table, he had put it, on leaving, into the inner pocket of his overcoat.

"I shouldn't leave," began Mr. Risley, and then, with a nervous thrill, changed the sentence to, "—this place before the gambling begins at the Casino."

"I don't think we shall," said Charles, surprised at the irrelevance of the advice, "though we can't afford to gamble now."

They said good night, and went upstairs. On Mr. Risley's dressing-table was his bill, with an intimation from Miss Pringle that, failing an immediate settlement, she would have to ask him to leave the pension and would put the matter into the hands of the police. The bill was for 1,600 lire. Mr. Risley looked at his razor, which lay beside it. This was the end, the very end. He opened it, and held it for a moment in his hand. Then he put it back, took off his boots, crept downstairs, and stole the pocketbook from Charles's coat. Incredibly, he was influenced at least as much by his desire not to fail in his social obligations to his victims next day as from fear of Miss Pringle's bill.

In his room he opened the case. In it were forty pounds in English notes and 2,000 lire. Roast chicken and Burgundy passed before Mr. Risley in an endless stream.

When, five minutes later, terrified by what he had done, he opened his door to take it down again, he saw Charles at the top of the stairs.

"I believe I've left my pocketbook in my overcoat," he said, with a worried look. "I suppose it'll be all right. Do you think it would be possible to raise a drink at this time of night, or is Luigi asleep? We might

as well have a nightcap, as I've got to go down."

Mr. Risley felt himself turn white. But in the yellow gloom cast by the shaded electric candles Charles noticed nothing. Mr. Risley swallowed a large lump in his throat.

"I was just going to try, myself," he said: "I've developed a ghastly toothache."

He put a shaking hand on his cheek. They went down. Charles felt in his overcoat pocket, and went deadly white, and tried all the pockets in turn.

"It's gone," he said. "I know I had it at the Casino. I don't see how I could have dropped it. There's sixty pounds in it. I must get hold of Miss Pringle."

With difficulty they awakened the waiter, who fetched down his mistress in a gray flannel dressing-gown. She immediately assumed that Charles either had dropped the money or had never had it, and was trying to defraud her and discredit the house. Mr. Risley, with the notes in his pocket, found it difficult to second his demand for the police. The vision of roast chicken with which he had begun the adventure was rapidly giving way to a gruesome picture of macaroni in an Italian prison. Perhaps not even macaroni. He had an idea that the Fascist government would not be above starving its prisoners to make them confess.

Miss Pringle, at last, telephoned for the police, while Charles went upstairs to tell his wife. The police, not being Fascisti, were leisurely in their procedure. It took two hours for his subordinates to get out of bed the large, cunning official who rejoiced in the title of marshal. As he had a uniform to match the rank, it also took him some time to dress.

MR. RISLEY sat in his room, listening to his heartbeats, and tried to think of some plan. In the end he came to the conclusion that he had better keep the case in his pocket.

As it turned out, he had no reason to fear. The marshal twisted his mustaches, made a perfunctory search of the servants' rooms, and put Charles through a searching cross-examination inspired by Miss Pringle. In the course of it, it came out that the young man's name was spelled Sevenoaks, a fact which served obscurely to harden Mr. Risley's heart against him.

"Well," said Charles furiously, "are they going to imprison me because they've stolen my money? The English consul will have to begin his useful life if this goes on."

"I think," said Mr. Risley, "that the man thinks you dropped it. Are you sure you didn't?"

"How the blazes can I be sure?" said Charles. "But I don't see how I could drop it out of an inside pocket."

The marshal went. Mr. Risley, who felt much safer, offered Charles a drink, but Miss Pringle, declaring that it was after hours, refused to give it to him.

The next day, when he woke up, Mr. Risley felt frightened again, but when Charles and Camilla smiled at him at luncheon, he recovered his nerve and went over to them.

"Look here," said Charles, "you don't know us, but we are in an awful hole. All we had was in that pocketbook; we haven't even enough to wire home. Will you lend us enough for that? I'll have to send four telegrams, to make reasonably sure."

"Of course," said Mr. Risley, and felt positively generous. "Will two hundred lire be enough, or would you like three?"

Charles shot a look at Camilla, and said that two hundred would do. Mr. Risley handed them over. He watched them go off with a feeling of positive benevolence, and then, remembering Charles's quick look at his wife, wondered again whether they suspected him. He spent an uneasy, but not unpleasant, afternoon, which began with liqueur brandy, and went slowly on via tea to apéritifs. At seven o'clock, Charles and Camilla met him at the Casino for the dinner he had promised them.

Mr. Risley had begun to feel again that comfortable feeling of solvency almost essential to a man of his type. He bowed over Camilla's hand, and fussed over his guests' comfort.

"I have ordered a roast chicken," he said, "with sausages and bacon, and a particular sauce. A magnificent bird. I made them show it to me. Will you have a cocktail?"

"Please," said Camilla miserably.

Charles, on the other hand, was gay.

"Cheer up, Mouse," he said. "We'll have money to pay the bill tomorrow, thanks to Mr. Risley. Then we can clear out and get the consul to gip the police up. Evviva Mussolini!" And he swallowed his cocktail.

The exquisitely cooked chicken and the unchilled Burgundy were brought in. Mr. Risley gave Camilla all the best bits. Charles talked to him about politics, but his wife sat in a silent, miserable heap, and to Mr. Risley's horror only pecked small shreds off his titbits. Suddenly she looked up.

"Oh, Mr. Risley!" she said. "You know this place. Are the police ever going to do anything about our money? We must get it back—we must."

Her large gray eyes were full of tears.

"But," said Mr. Risley, "you're pretty well off, aren't you?"

"Well off!" said Charles. "I should jolly well say we weren't. That money was all we had to last us for the next two months."

"Yes," said Camilla, "and then we only get sixty pounds to last us for the next three."

"We're on our honeymoon," said Charles, "and we sold all the ugly, expensive wedding presents our aunts and uncles and people sent us, for a good time in Paris, and nice clothes, and Camilla's wrist-watch."

"I can't eat," said Camilla, and began to cry quietly over the chicken. "I can't have it spoiled. I won't. I can't bear it. We were so happy." Tears trickled off her chin, her lovely mouth turned down at the corners.

A GREAT lump rose in Mr. Risley's throat. To his horrified surprise, he heard himself saying: "I didn't know. I'm sorry. I took it."

There was a silence, and he heard himself repeating: "I didn't know. I'm sorry I did it."

The two young people stared across the room. The girl looked down, past elderly, once handsome, once smart Mr. Wilmot Risley, and rubbed a finger round the jeweled setting of her watch. Charles shot a sidelong look at his wife, and put a finger on her wrist. She smiled at him.

"I wonder if you'd lend me forty pounds, Risley," he said. "The Italian money doesn't matter."

Mr. Risley handed over the pocketbook.

"Why didn't you tell us how bad it was?" said Camilla. "You're going to dance with me tonight, Mr. Risley, whether you can or not."

Mr. Risley cried quietly into his roast chicken.

Adventure in a New Setting

THE CITADEL

*Captain Bush Comes Face to Face with
Death in the Old Negro Kingdom of Haiti*

By Joseph Husband

Illustrations by C. G. Gaul

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story up to this point is here.

AT TWENTY-FIVE, John Bush had attained in experience and in material possessions what many men would account themselves lucky to have at forty; and he was now captain and half-owner of the brig *Lucy*, one of the few American merchant ships that plied West Indian waters in spite of the war between Great Britain and the United States.

On December 7, 1814, he anchored at Le Cap in French Haitian Santo Domingo to discharge his cargo. It was two years since he had seen Le Cap, but still the few hours he had spent with Virginie Goutier remained vivid in his memory.

Upon landing, John went first to the Hôtel de la République, and there he received a blow. He found several old acquaintances and learned that Leroy Mangan, Virginie's guardian, had promised her in marriage to Pierre Nicholas, an officer in Christophe's army, and a man of color.

Since the overthrow of French rule by Toussaint, Mangan had been one of the few white men favored by the black despots, Dessalines and Christophe. After a hasty glass with Monsieur Egalité and his friend, John went to the home of Leroy Mangan.

Virginie was alone. He had left her a girl—now she was a woman, full-blown and exquisite. The thought of her loveliness being bartered away by her guardian maddened him.

She greeted him with a warmth and pleasure that made him glow, and she confided in him her unhappiness and her fears. But Monsieur Mangan greeted him coldly and shortly after gave him a curt dismissal.

For five days John did not see Virginie. In the interim he completed his business transactions with Monsieur Samatan, a negro of integrity and a sincere friend of the young captain.

Then, one afternoon in the Café de la République, Bush encountered Captain Nicholas. He was seated with several other officers at a near-by table. Their conversation was noisy and ribald. Presently one of them raised his glass.

"To *mon cher* Nicholas, and the impending marriage," he said.

Nicholas rose and bowed. Then John heard Virginie's name from the lips of this half-breed and with it a vile boast about the white girl he was to marry. Like a flash John leaped across the intervening space and with a terrific blow felled Nicholas. In a moment the place was in a tumult and knives flashed. Picking up a chair, John cleared a path to the door.

He made his way through the rain and mud and succeeded in reaching the landing-stage where Luke was waiting in the boat. As they rowed out to the *Lucy* they saw lanterns flashing and heard pistol shots.

A day out from Le Cap they were pursued

by a British corvette; in the ensuing battle they held their own and escaped, but in a sinking condition. The survivors and what stores they could take put off in the longboat and made for Tortuga, a hundred miles to the south.

On the second day they sighted an English brig and Bush put into execution a daring plan which he had been formulating. All but three of them hid under the canvas and they then signaled distress.

The brig headed toward them, evidently with the intention of casting a line to the longboat without stopping. This, fortunately for Bush's plan, did not necessitate the presence of officers or crew on deck. So they succeeded in boarding her, overpowering the two seamen who had thrown them the line and taking possession of the ship.

John found the captain and three British officers drinking and gaming in the cabin, and had their condition permitted a struggle, the surprise of the attack would still have put them at his mercy. He proposed landing them at Tortuga and then returning to Le Cap for Virginie. But he discovered that mutiny was smoldering among his crew. They were unwilling to jeopardize this richly laden brig which, according to the law of the sea, was a prize ship in which all should have a share.

John pondered these things as they headed for Tortuga. Return to Le Cap he must and would, but could he check an outbreak among the men?

RISING sharply from a sea of glittering blue, the island of Tortuga flung its green shadow against the pale band of the horizon. Early in the morning the lookout in the foretop had announced the landfall to the deck, and a few minutes later Luke had roused his master from the heavy sleep in which he had sunk, wrapped in a greatcoat in an angle of the poop bulwark, to see the bearing of the now clearly visible land. His eyes were still heavy with sleep and for a moment he stood in stupefied bewilderment, uncertain whether to believe the mad procession of dreams from which he had been awakened or to accept the reality of the day.

He had preferred to stay on deck during the night and in the hours between midnight and the dawn he had again walked in the garden of Monsieur Mangan with

Virginie's white shoulder beside him gleaming in the moonlight. They were happy dreams and reality came with a dull shock as he blinked his eyes in the sunlight.

Bush ate the bread and coffee that Luke brought to him on the poop deck, and by the time he had finished, the lofty mountains of Tortuga were sharply defined against the sky. The men were all on deck except the watch which had just been relieved and had gone below. Forward, a guard was sitting on a bitt near the forecastle hatch, a cocked and loaded pistol across his knees; there was no other indication that the *Hercules* was not the peaceful merchantman that she had seemed until the recent occurrences.

"Mr. Huggett!" he called. The first mate hurried aft. "Muster the prisoners on deck."

One by one they appeared from the forecastle, a sullen little group that stared boldly into the faces of their captors and slouched nonchalantly against the bulwark. Bush walked forward and faced them.

"By afternoon," he said, "we shall be off Tortuga. At that time I shall free you and place you in the longboat with the necessary arms and provisions for your sustenance. I shall instruct your captain to proceed immediately to the shore and shall suggest that you make your way to the harbor on the south side of the island where you can obtain shelter and, ultimately, passage. In the meanwhile let there be no disturbance of any kind, else I shall deal differently with you."

In the cabin the three army officers were playing cards, and although it was early morning another bottle of Spanish wine graced the board. Briefly Bush repeated the information he had given to the men. "I shall permit you," he said, "to remove with you all of your personal effects that are convenient for stowage in the boat. I am sorry that I cannot do more for you."

The four men at the table regarded him in silence. As was to be expected, it was the red-faced major who exploded with tempestuous anger, his fat body fairly quivering with rage.

"Ye scum!" The words almost choked him and his face grew even more red from his coughing. "So that's it, ye dirty pirate. Ye plan to dump us into an open boat to row to a desert island while ye sail away in a stolen ship." He trailed off in an incoherent string of curses.

"Stop that!" Bush thrust his face down toward the crimson countenance of the major. "One more word from you and, by God, you'll hear from me." As instantly as it had come, the look of anger was gone from his face and a smile quivered on his lips; he turned to Selby, who had risen and was standing behind his chair. "I regret, sir, that your companion's ill humor necessitated on my part this display of impatience. I hope that I may find you more lenient with me."

Without replying Selby walked across the cabin deck and held out his hand.

"This is irregular, I know," he said, hesitating for words. "You have come aboard us in a most piratical manner, killing several of our crew and seizing our ship. That you show us no authority from your country cannot but confirm the impressions we have received, unless we are to take your word that you hold the letters of marque that you claim. Yet I for one cannot but feel that there must be more to justify your extraordinary action than can be told. I admire your spirit and your audacity, and recognizing a gentleman, I am willing, sir, to make that allowance, and I am ready to thank you for the courtesy you have shown us, and, unhappy though it may prove, thank you also for the release which you have just promised us."

Bush held out his hand. "Perhaps, sir," he said, "I may sometime the better thank you for your confidence. The flag of the country which my brig wore gave me the right to engage, and, if able, seize the ship of our enemy. That my command became of necessity a small boat did not deprive me of that right. This capture is lawful. I regret that I must deprive the captain of his ship. Yet that, too, is war. Some day we may meet again." He bowed gravely and left the cabin.

LATE in the afternoon Bush gave the order to the steersman to bring the *Hercules* into the wind. All day the breeze had steadily freshened and at four o'clock the sudden rending of the fore royal into a fringe of flying ribbons told Bush that he must shorten sail if he would save the old and rotten canvas. Slowly during the day the green mountains of Tortuga had risen higher and higher above the torn blue of the sea, a long rolling range that stretched away

to the eastward from the lofty rounded peak on the western end of the island. Not more than a mile of water now intervened between the brig and the shore. It was rough but the seas were not breaking, and as they were now in the leeward of the land a boat could make the passage with safety.

"Lower away the longboat, Mr. Huggett." Slowly, the falls were let go through the creaking sheaves and the stern of the heavy boat dipped in a wave that slid beneath her. The next moment she was riding alongside the brig, rising and falling on the passing seas.

From the poop Bush watched the operation and silently enumerated the various stores that were piled high in her bow and stern.

"Have you everything necessary in the boat?" he inquired. "Then muster the prisoners!"

One by one they emerged from the fore-castle and stood whistling and talking in a little group at the hatchway. Each carried a small bundle of clothing, and one, a man-o'-war's man by the cutlass scar across his hairy cheek, staggered under an enormous sea-chest that he had refused to abandon. A little apart from the sailors, the captain of the *Hercules* and the three English officers stood silently awaiting further orders.

Huggett glanced at Bush and saw him nod in answer. "Over you go, lads!" he shouted. One by one the men dropped over the side and with less alacrity the captain and the three officers followed. Lieutenant Selby turned his face to the silent man who watched them from the poop and waved a careless salute as he climbed over the bulwark.

"Cast off," roared Huggett. The line was let go and fell with a slap across the bow of the longboat. Riding low in the water, the boat slid slowly past the poop. Oars shot out and backed with a swirl of water beneath the blades. In the bow a sailor shook a clenched fist at the blue-coated man who watched them from the gilded stern of the brig. "Yankee swine—" The words trailed off unintelligibly on the wind.

In ominous silence the men on deck saw the longboat grow small in the distance until Huggett's order to man the braces brought them to their stations. Slowly the sails filled as the *Hercules's* head fell off before the wind and with her mast again staggering

under the crowding sails she resumed her course to the southeast, her bow pointing defiantly toward Le Cap Française.

There is plenty of sea room and deep water in the broad channel between Tortuga and the island of Santo Domingo. On a fine night with even no more than the starlight it is a safe and easy passage, particularly if the wind is favorable. But on this night the wind shortly after ten o'clock backed round to the east and began to blow in a constantly increasing gale into the very eyes of the *Hercules*.

It was no later than eight o'clock when John Bush retired to the cabin. Huggett had the ship, and in the first mate's ability Bush felt a confidence that permitted him to undress and to lie down in the captain's great berth for as much sleep as he might be able to take. He was wearied even beyond his realization, and his head had barely settled in the musty pillow before complete oblivion seized him.

DAY dawned with the splendor of a sunrise behind a wrack of torn and flying clouds. With the first white light of the morning John Bush awakened and climbed hurriedly from the bunk. His first thought was of alarm, for he had cautioned Huggett to call him during the night. Half-dressed he climbed the companion-ladder. A strong, cool wind struck him in the face and freed his eyes from the last vestige of sleep. On the poop Huggett held the wheel. Forward, a couple of hands leaned against the bulwark. Huggett's face was whitened with salt and his wet clothes hung heavily about his square, short body. He smiled broadly as he saw the captain.

"Ain't a bad sailer fur a scow," he commented dryly. "Ran through a bit of blow last night. Slept well, did ye?"

"How are the men?"

"All hands all right," the other answered. "Turned 'em in at dawn."

"Turn in yourself; I'll take her."

From the galley the cook shambled aft, a copper pot of steaming coffee in one hand, a metal cup in the other. Bush drank the hot draught with relish. That and his long sleep had completely revived him; all his natural optimism and enthusiasm were returned. As he steadied himself against the tugging spokes, the problem of the future seemed bright in comparison with the un-

foreseen difficulties that had been surmounted.

Far astern Tortuga lay like a cloud on the horizon; on the right the hills of Santo Domingo piled sheer from the sea, their dark green sides apparently unscarred by any sign of human habitation. The air was extraordinarily transparent and the rim of the horizon stood out sharp and clear against the sky. At eight bells Bush broke out the crew and sent the men swarming aloft to shake out the topsail reefs. Huggett again on deck climbed to the foretop and with one arm circling the mast and his eyes shaded by his other hand peered intently at the coast.

"Can jest make it out," the mate commented as he crossed the poop and took his place beside the captain. "May be some other hill but looks like Le Morne. Ought to be, anyway. Should make the bar by four o'clock."

Bush regarded the sails. "Yes," he replied. "We'll stand off until just before dark, then run in and anchor off the town. Have your English colors ready, Mr. Huggett. I do not want to be recognized. They'll take her for the British ship she is and won't bother us until morning. Then, no matter what they do."

"Ye'll be going ashore?" the mate queried. "Yes."

"An' ye mean that we'll put to sea again at dawn?"

"Yes."

Huggett shifted his feet with evident embarrassment. "Damn it, captain, but it's a short call you're makin' at the Cap, if you'll let me say so."

"I shall stay only long enough to fetch a passenger who will sail with us; a lady, Mr. Huggett."

"That ain't news, if I do say it," Huggett replied. He smiled broadly. "I cal'lated it weren't coffee you was after." Then a serious look followed the smile. "I guess mebbe, captain, it won't do no harm to tell me a little more about this. There's the crew to handle, sir, and if you was to get in trouble—"

"Mr. Huggett"—Bush's blue eyes were fixed on the hairy face of the first mate—"a young woman, Mademoiselle Goutier, is in great distress. I have promised to help her. As soon as we anchor, I shall go ashore and go directly to her house. It is unlikely

that I shall be noticed, for it will be dark, and I shall hope to pass without suspicion. Luke will wait in the boat at the landing. If all goes well, we shall return in a few hours. Are the men in good spirits?"

Huggett nodded. "Mr. Mogridge has been talking, sir, but I think there's no harm done. Do ye want some one to go with ye?"

"No; you will stand by here. We may have to make a quick get-away. I want the brig in readiness to sail the instant I return. There was no sail in sight from aloft?"

"No, sir."

"That's well. Report to me immediately anything that may be sighted."

It has been evident that John Bush was not lacking in assurance and a confidence in his ability to accomplish his purpose, however it might be encompassed by attendant difficulties. Perhaps the success that in the past had so generally characterized his ventures was due in large measure not only to the clear analysis of a situation which his active brain invariably formulated, but also to his blind disregard of the possibility of failure. So it was that in the present instance he failed entirely to consider the chance that Virginie Goutier might not fall instantly into the daring scheme that he had evolved. To be sure, he had every reason to believe that to her death would be preferable to the contemplated marriage with Nicholas. And yet for her to flee on a few minutes' notice to sea with a man with whom her acquaintance was little more than casual required an aptitude for instant decision which might not be expected in a woman of her gentle and untried character.

But that too was a question that could not be answered at the present time. It was a long chance but the stake was high, and a few hours would spell the answer in terms of success or failure.

In the cabin Luke was busy with a bucket of sea water and a swab cleaning the deck and the paint work. Bush had selected the cabin of Lieutenant Selby as the most comfortable for the reception of Virginie, and under the rough but thorough cleansing of the mute it already presented a clean and inviting appearance. In a locker Bush had discovered a supply of fresh linen as well as a variety of French china and glassware which he immediately commissioned into

service. Although far inferior to the cabin of the *Lucy*, the effect was not uninviting, and in his imagination he already saw Virginie moving about the narrow room, completing by her presence the picture that his mind sought to create.

About mid-afternoon Bush called Huggett to the poop and led him aft to the stern rail where they could converse out of hearing of the steersman. The *Hercules* was sailing with considerable movement and the stern rose and fell in long upward rushes and abrupt descents that caused them to steady themselves by a firm hold on the rail. Beneath the counter the wake churned out in a wide path of pale green and soapy white water, a long trail that extended in sinuous curves far behind them in the ultramarine of the heaving sea. The air was strong and cool, heavy with its burden of moisture and ocean fragrance.

BRIEFLY Bush again outlined his plan to Huggett, who listened with tacit acceptance; but in his rugged face and honest eyes Bush saw a disapproval of the proposed venture. He was tempted for a time to argue, but he realized that the mate's convictions were seldom open to compromise and the alternative of his own retraction quite naturally could not occur to him. Then for the first time there was a tinge of emotion in his voice.

"You will instruct the men, Mr. Huggett, to shot the carronades and these small ones"—he kicked the carriage of one of the two brass guns that swept the stern as he spoke—"with grape. Have three charges of powder on deck and break out the magazine. Also serve out cutlasses to all hands and have pikes and axes ready to repel boarders. I want this done before we cross the bar. You will wait for me until noon tomorrow. At that time, if I do not return, you will sail immediately for Philadelphia, where you will report the ship and her cargo to my uncle, Mr. Gildersleave. In the desk in my cabin you will find the necessary papers to authorize your command. Serve a double grog to all hands before we enter. I shall rely on you to see that the men conduct themselves properly."

The first mate regarded the sail over the horizon and then the now prominent land-fall of Le Morne, but his thoughts were quite evidently not concerned with either.

"Have you anything you wish to say?" Bush concluded.

Huggett hitched at his belt, his usual preparatory movement before speaking. "Well, sir," he finally muttered, "it's not fur me to say, but I tell ye, Captain Bush, this is bad business. I've seen good heads turned afore by a pretty face. The devils they be, and the innocenter they be, the worse they be. It's yourself I'm thinking of, Captain Bush. There's gals in every port; fine gals and yours for the choosing. Ye asked me for my say; I've said it." He spat over the stern with the emphasis of a period to his words. It was a long speech for Thomas Huggett, the longest that Bush had ever heard him make.

"Mr. Huggett, I thank you for what you've said," he finally answered. "Your words bespeak your loyalty. As for what I purpose, that I shall carry out as I have described to you. You can show your loyalty by carrying out my orders to the letter."

"That I'll do, captain."

The afternoon was wearing to a glorious close. High around the horizon the great creamy cumulus clouds piled one upon another up to the blue vault above. Beneath them was the sea, a moving, living surface of deepest blue. And on the right lay the high shores of Santo Domingo, bright green in the mellow light. The western clouds were flaming with unbelievable color. Sunset was but a short time away.

Already the men had cleared the tarpaulins from the guns and had shotted them in accordance with the orders that Huggett had given to them. Both bow anchors were also freed from their lashings. Everywhere about the brig there was an appearance of readiness for the unknown emergency. The men wore an air of expectancy; they were all on deck, moving about restlessly and gathering every few minutes in little groups to talk in an undertone and then to move on again in restless inactivity.

Le Morne was now on the starboard beam and Bush scanned the harbor through his spyglass. In the round lens he could see a few small schooners tossing at their anchors. That was all. The coast was clear. At least there could be no interruption by another ship.

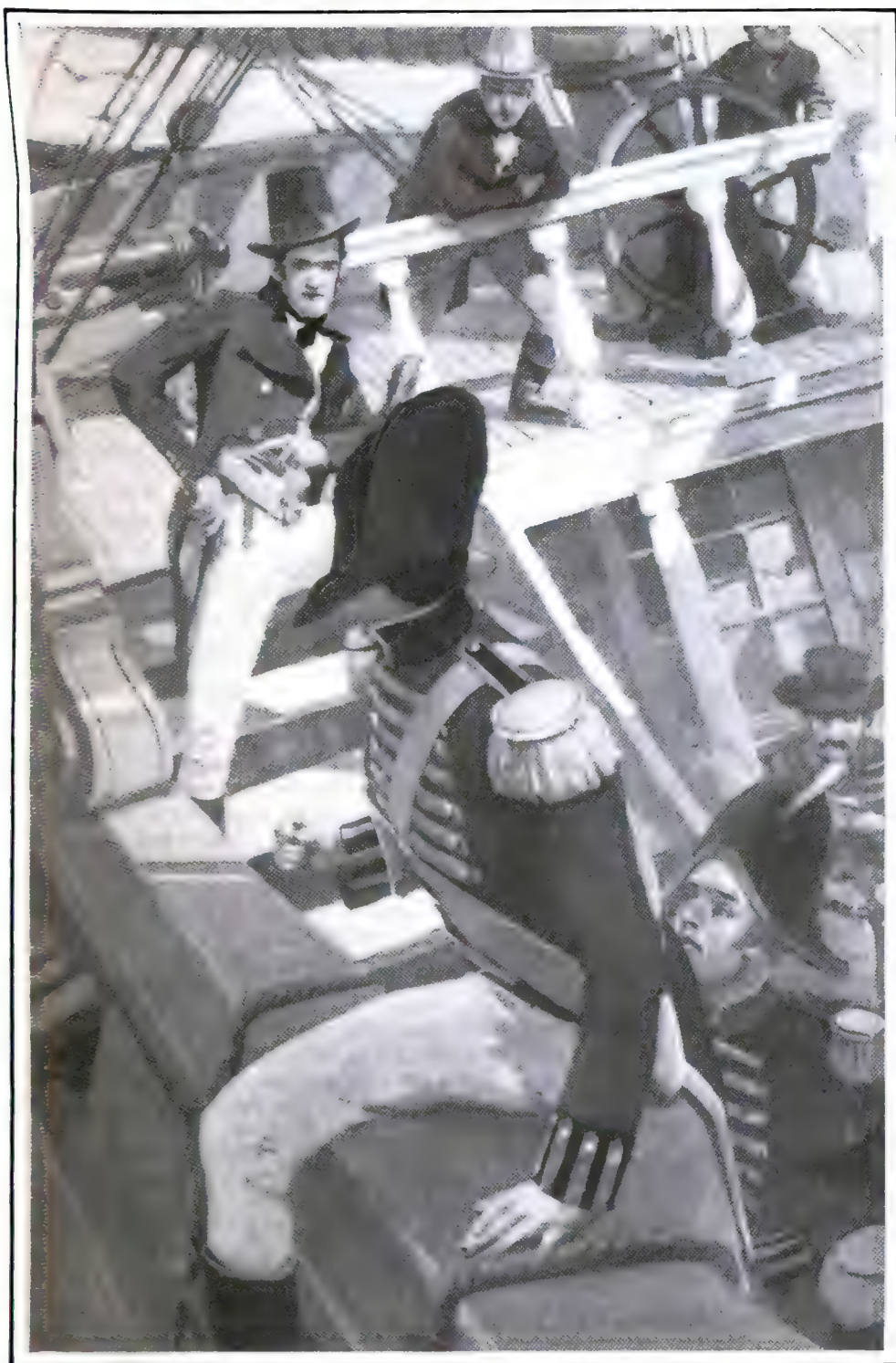
The sun was low as the *Hercules* crossed the bar, its slanting rays striking for a brief

minute the red flag of England that whipped out straight from the halyards at the peak. In a final conflagration the sun dipped beyond the horizon. In the east the smooth white clouds glowed pink in the reflected light. Then the day ended. Two miles away a few lights already gleamed like fireflies among the trees of Le Cap. There was the warm fragrant smell of land in the air. A mile offshore the *Hercules* came about and with topsails aback ran slowly until the splash of the anchor told Bush that the next chapter in his adventurous career was at hand.

AS SOON as he had assured himself that the brig was in readiness to sail on a moment's notice Bush went down to his cabin. On the table Luke had placed bread and meat and a bottle of brandy. He ate quickly and sparingly and washed down the dry crumbs with a gulp of smarting liquor. He dressed carefully and with a quizzical smile on his lips surveyed in the small mirror the fit of his coat and the effect of the black military hat he had taken from Lieutenant Selby's cabin. From his chest he took a flat leather case and opened the cover. A pair of finely chased dueling pistols lay gleaming against the leather. Carefully he loaded and primed them and secured them in his belt beneath the fold of the greatcoat. Next from the locker of the former captain of the *Hercules* he provided himself with a slim dagger that he had noticed there when he had rummaged the cabin the day previous.

"Tomorrow morning," he muttered to himself, "we shall be again at sea—we!" He spoke the word slowly. Then he added, "If all goes well."

As he came on deck Bush glanced at the sky. Overhead the stars were shining, but the east was banked with clouds. The moon would rise late, and if the clouds remained it would be later still before it climbed into the clear. The darkness would prove a friendly aid. A number of the men were loafing about the deck, and he felt their eyes fixed on him. Somehow their unabashed gaze gave him an unaccustomed sensation of self-consciousness and embarrassment. A lantern had been swung near the gangway and he saw Huggett's face stolid in the light and behind him the black features of the mute, his eyes white and staring against his ebon face.



"Over you go, lads!" shouted Huggett. . . . Lieutenant Selby turned and waved a careless salute to the silent man on the poop as he climbed over the bulwark.

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"You have my orders, Mr. Huggett," he said simply.

"Aye, sir," the mate answered.

Bush landed at a small wharf north of the main landing-stage, a rough unfrequented structure used chiefly by the native fishermen. Already he could feel the warm breath of the heated land in his face, and in the stillness faint indefinable sounds crept out over the water.

"Luke, you will wait here until it is light. Then, if I do not come, go back to the ship."

The small waves slapped and chucked among the piles of the wharf and a fishy smell impregnated the damp air. Quietly Bush swung himself up to the top of the wharf. Beneath it already Luke was tying the small boat. Unconcerned, Bush realized the negro would sleep there unseen until dawn.

The little wharf was deserted, as was also the narrow beach on either side of it. Behind the beach was an empty field. Beyond was a black row of palm trees, and then the road. Cautiously he crossed the strip of open land and gained the trees. They were lofty coco palms and from behind a huge bulbous bole he peered up and down the white road. It was empty. No one had seen his solitary landing.

Boldly he pushed through the undergrowth and struck out north along the road. He had come ashore north of the main part of the town; the houses here were fewer and more widely separated. Ahead on the left a high white wall rose among the palms; the ruin of a French residence. The entrance to the grounds edged the road, a lofty arch on massive pillars. Suddenly his heart began to pound violently for in the shadow of the arch he saw the dark figure of a man. Resolutely he walked on. Through the ruined gate a light shone dimly; a native hut, doubtless, in the grounds of the devastated mansion. From the corner of his eyes as he passed he watched the man in the gateway. There was no movement or indication of interest. Again he felt a distinct relief; his presence on the road at least excited no comment.

FOR fifteen minutes Bush walked steadily. Then ahead he saw the white gateposts at the entrance to the grounds of Monsieur Leroy Mangan. Beyond the entrance all was darkness. He had not expected to see

a light, for the intervening barrier of the giant mangoes concealed the house from the road, but the silence and blackness of the place disconcerted him; and he stepped into the shelter of the trees to determine his next step. The warm, still air was fragrant almost to suffocation with the perfume of a guava tree somewhere near by in the darkness. It was very still. As far as he could see in either direction the road was deserted.

He stepped out again, and now walking more slowly and with conscious caution, turned into the drive, his shoes crunching noisily on the gravel. The sound of his footsteps alarmed him and he almost precipitately sought the enveloping darkness of the trees. Here there was no betraying sound, his feet fell noiseless on the heavy turf.

Out of the night came a sound, so clear and so near that he stopped abruptly. Some one was playing on a pianoforte; sweet and sharp the notes sounded, a fragile overture. Then, plaintive a woman's voice rose above the tinkling accompaniment of the instrument. It was a French love song. Clear and distinct the words fell on his ears. It was *Virginie*.

Through the bushes Bush could now see the house clearly. On the side a light shone out against the trees. Noiselessly he crept around the corner. Three wide French doors opened on the lawn and through them the yellow glow of many candles came. The whole interior of the room was visible. Then, against the wall on the right, he saw her, her dark hair coiled about the small head; her bare shoulders very white in the candlelight. She was sitting on a chair before the pianoforte with her back toward him. Unseen by her he was able to scan the room. Deliberately his eyes searched it. Each detail vividly impressed him; the dark portraits against the gray walls; the massive *escritoire* with panels of crotch mahogany, and leaded glass doors in the high bookcase above; the table with claw feet of brass; the gilded chairs, the vases of flowers, and the yellow tongues of the candles behind the screens of glass.

With impetuous determination he strode to the center doorway. She did not hear him, for his feet made no sound on the grass, and as he stood hesitating her fingers ran again along the keys. Fascinated, he waited, but the little run died away in silence.

"*Virginie!*"

He barely breathed the word but at the sound she turned, rising from her chair with a little startled cry that ended with a quick intake of her breath as her eyes found him.

"John!" As though to warn him from her, she held out a hand, palm toward him. He ignored her gesture and came across the floor, his steps sounding lightly on the polished boards.

"I have come," he said. "I have come as I promised. You must go with me, now, this very moment, or it may be too late!"

"Go with you?" Her great eyes sought his face. He had taken her hands in his and she was so near that he could hear her quickened breathing and see her breast rise and fall beneath the white bodice of her dress. "Go with you, now?" she repeated.

"I have a ship in the harbor; a boat is waiting. I shall take you away, where you will be safe. You trust me?" He knew he did not need the question; he could read the answer in her face, in the pressure of her fingers caught about his own. Still dazed by the shock of his coming, she regarded him, unable to grasp the reality of his presence.

"Virginie!" The sound of the name on his lips brought her to herself. With a sob she released his hands and Bush felt his arms encircle the smooth white shoulders; the fragrance of her hair was in his face; her warm body clung to him. Then slowly she lifted her face. In an intoxication of emotion he bent over her; their lips met.

He felt her head sink forward upon his breast; then with a sudden movement she slipped from his arms and thrust him from her.

"Mon Dieu," she breathed, "I love you! It is you of whom I have dreamed; that you would come; that you would take me with you; that I might be yours always."

His arms reached for her but she eluded him with a half-step backward. "And you have come," she continued. "Yes, I shall go. Oh—" Her voice trailed off in a little cry.

From an adjoining room a footfall sounded. Then the tapestry across the door was flung back and Leroy Mangan stepped into the candlelight.

TO WHAT, may I ask"—Monsieur Mangan spoke slowly and with cold distinctness in every word—"do I owe the honor of this visit?"

So unexpected had been Mangan's coming that he could not fail to read the startled look on Bush's face as he stared at him. With a superb effort Virginie turned toward the intruder, her chin uplifted, her eyes fearless in their level gaze. Her lips moved slightly as if she were trying to speak, but the words did not come.

Then instinctively her eyes turned toward Bush. There was desperation in her glance, a combination of resolution and appeal. Imperturbable and almost casual in his manner, Bush stood beside the great mahogany table, the fingers of one hand drumming lightly on its shining surface. There were even the wrinkles of a smile about his lips. Only the blue eyes, half shut, were hard and cold.

"Monsieur Mangan," he said in a pleasant tone, "denied by you with, I may say, scant courtesy, the privilege of calling on your ward, I have, I admit, somewhat informally come without invitation for that same purpose."

The two men stared fixedly into each other's eyes as though trying to win the mastery.

"I will even say," Bush continued, "that an affair of the heart should require no explanation. I would desire, monsieur, to ask of you the hand of Mademoiselle Virginie in marriage."

A slight color for a fleeting moment stained the white cheeks of Mangan and his eyes strayed from those of the captain to the slender girl.

"You are aware, Captain Bush," he said coldly, "that my ward is affianced to another?"

"I am." The smile withered on the captain's lips.

"And you, sir, a mere American peddler of merchandise, presume to intrigue behind my back and tamper with the affections of this young girl whom I consider as I would were she of my own flesh and blood."

Before the eyes of John Bush the tall, white-faced man across the table appeared suddenly as though seen through a blur of flashing light. He felt the blood pounding furiously through his veins. He was trembling. A mad fury overwhelmed him. With a quick movement his hand felt for a pistol at his waist. But as he snatched at the pistol grip the white arms of Virginia unfolded him and he heard her entreat from

lips half buried in his breast that he would spare the life of her guardian.

Not once during the scene had Leroy Mangan evidenced the various emotions that must have possessed him; not even when Captain Bush sought the pistol and Mangan read the desire to kill in the tense blue eyes, did the pale face change its cynical expression; nor did the fingers of the lean hand betray him by an involuntary movement. Rather, like a distinguished and slightly supercilious spectator he regarded the drama that was acted before him.

"Come," he said finally. "These heroics, although excellent examples of the emotionalism of youth, can accomplish nothing." He walked slowly around the table toward them and instinctively John Bush tightened his arm around the white shoulders of the girl. Mangan touched her lightly on the arm. "This cannot be, Virginie. It is late. It would be best perhaps for you to retire to your room. Hard words have passed. Perhaps Captain Bush will join me in a glass of wine. Alone, we can discuss this weighty matter to some purpose."

Reluctantly the girl allowed Bush's arm to release her, and with her face half hidden in her hands she turned toward the door. Then, unexpectedly, she lifted her head sharply and regarded with passionate scorn the cold features of Leroy Mangan.

"MONSIEUR MANGAN, I hate you!" Her voice was high-pitched but calm. "In spite of all that you have done for me, I despise you! It is possible that you may separate us"—she gave Bush a fleeting glance—"but I shall seek death rather than become the bride of Pierre Nicholas!"

With her head high she walked across the floor. Bush saw her arm very white against the tapestry as she drew it aside; then the hanging fell back into place. She was gone.

"And now," said Mangan, "will you be seated, monsieur? Perhaps calmly we can discuss this matter that so deeply concerns you. Cold reason is an excellent antidote for passion and there has been tonight a preponderance of the latter." He waved his hand toward a low deep chair beside the table and drew another chair up to face it. "But before we begin to talk, if you will excuse me, I will get a bottle of Bordeaux

wine from a shipment that has been recently sent to me." He moved toward a door in the end of the room as he spoke. "It is late," he added; "my servants retire early. I will get the bottle and glasses myself."

Bush did not reply. This unexpected turn in Mangan's attitude confounded him. In the suave hospitality of the man he sensed an unpleasant reaction which he could not analyze. He distrusted him now more thoroughly than ever; the man's strange smoothness repelled him. Not less had Virginie's display of spirit taken him aback. In her hot flare of anger and in the burning indignation in her eyes he had caught a glimpse of a strong and passionate nature which, like his own, would dare all danger in the great emergency. From the next room came the clink of glasses and through the open door he could see the high white room. At the far side Mangan was bending over the sideboard, a huge mahogany piece on the top of which Bush's eye caught the glint of glass and silver.

Virginie returned to his thoughts and he wondered how he could reach her if a chance to escape should come. His hand wandered beneath the coat and fastened on the hilt of the slim knife. That was one way. A quick stab; there need be no sound, and then to the boat and away before the murder was discovered. The thought shocked him. Extreme as was the situation, there was no justification for that. Perhaps he could antagonize Mangan to a point where he would attack him; then the homicide would be justifiable in the light of self-defense. Again he recoiled at the thought. After all, that, too, would be murder. There was also a flaw in the plan. Mangan was difficult to antagonize; it was he, Bush, who doubtless would flare first. That had been the case before.

Across the room a marble clock struck twelve with sweet lingering strokes. What could keep Mangan so long? He had apparently left the dining-room, for John could no longer see him nor hear him fussing with the glasses. He examined the room in which he sat with roving eyes. The door at the other end led to the dining-room. On his right was the entrance to the garden and opposite it hung the piece of tapestry which concealed the doorway to the hall. As he regarded the green and brown weave, it seemed to flutter slightly as though shaken

by the breeze. Instinctively he leaned forward that he might glance along the floor, to see, if possible beneath its folds. By a few inches the hanging cleared the floor and in that scant aperture he saw in the faint candlelight a woman's foot shod in a white satin slipper. The foot was withdrawn noiselessly. It was Virginie's.

Why was Virginie hiding behind the curtain? The answer was obvious. Was not she as much as he absorbed in the mystery of Mangan's sudden affability? To her even more than to Bush the outcome of this awaited conversation was of vital import. His first inclination was to steal quietly to the door and warn her to caution, but that would probably only disclose her presence, for he now heard Mangan crossing the dining-room.

With a smile the other man laid the silver tray on the table. There were two glasses on it, fine thin glasses with fluted stems banded with dull gold. Beside them a bottle of yellow wine reflected the light like molten sunshine and threw dancing gleams of amber on the bright surface of the tray. Both glasses were filled.

"I am glad," Mangan said, "that you will reasonably discuss with me the problem which your presence and your personality have created." His cold eyes rested on Bush as he talked, and although his lips moved his features were immobile as though cast in plaster. Only the lean right hand gave movement; the long fingers ceaselessly toying with the fluted ruffle of his stock. "Pierre Nicholas is my friend," he continued, "which I realize forbids in you a remark which could not fail to offend me. But, ah, monsieur, permit me to anticipate what you would say: that in my friend Nicholas there is a touch of color which offends your cold, northern code. It is true. Yes, but is it not possible that we may differently regard these things here in this far country?"

NOTWITHSTANDING the obvious courtesy of Mangan and the patient tone of his voice the younger man realized that there was something which he could not fathom behind his smooth speech and manner.

"Monsieur Mangan," he said at last, "I am frankly puzzled by this sudden graciousness. Can it be that you will discuss coolly

with me that question which is uppermost in my mind? Will you fairly consider the qualifications which I can offer and compare them with those of this Nicholas, whose pretensions to the hand of your ward cannot be thinkable to a gentleman, the guardian of a defenseless woman?"

Mangan, who was still standing, pointed to the tray. "Perhaps, Captain Bush, you will honor me by drinking a glass of a wine; of which, I am proud to say, there is none better to be had." He lifted a glass by its stem between his strong, thin fingers. Bush rose from the chair and glanced down at the tray with his hand extended. Against the silver the yellow wine and sparkling crystal made a bright flash of color. Then beside the base of the glass his quick eye detected a tiny fleck of powder; yellow, it was, like a bit of pollen fallen from a flower. His eye caught it, but there was no reaction in his troubled brain. He lifted the glass.

As Bush's gaze rose to meet that of Mangan, his glass upheld, his eyes fell across Mangan's shoulder toward the mantled door. Slowly the tapestry parted and in the opening he saw Virginie. Their eyes met. As he looked, she raised her hand to her lips as though to drink, then shook her head and seemed to dash from her hand an imaginary glass to the floor.

It was over in a flash, and as he looked Bush saw again the fleck of yellow powder on the tray. Here was the answer to this studied hospitality, to Mangan's long absence from the room.

"Monsieur Mangan," he said with spontaneous gaiety that came with the realization of danger so narrowly averted, "may I not exchange glasses with you? I beg that you will grant so small a concession to my curious desire to drink from your glass rather than from my own?"

The speech was blunt and there was no opportunity for Mangan to escape the significance of Bush's words.

"Captain Bush, I hesitate to remind you that you forget yourself. In your words there is an implication that I hold as an insult to my hospitality, an implication that I can scarcely allow to pass unnoticed. Drink, sir, and let the act excuse your words."

He raised the wine to his lips, but Bush set his own glass firmly on the table.

"Monsieur Mangan, I believe that glass

of wine to be poisoned. I accuse you of the attempt to kill me. I dare you to drink the wine that you have poured for me."

"Your impudence, Captain Bush, demands more than an apology." For the first time the color flushed Mangan's cheeks; his eyes closed to narrow slits of gray, while his hand nervously fingered the ruffled neck-piece. "Drink, damn you!" he snarled.

In the same measure that Mangan's former calmness had tantalized Bush into a display of passion, so now the breakdown of the elder man's control established Bush the more securely in his easy defiance and irritating good humor.

"Perhaps," he said with a pleasant smile, "you would permit Mademoiselle Virginie to sip from the glass which I distrust?"

"Virginie is not here." Monsieur Mangan was plainly startled.

There was a rustle behind the tapestry; the heavy hanging was brushed aside and from the darkness of the hall Virginie stepped into the candlelight. She was very pale, but her small chin was uplifted and her large eyes surveyed the room with an expression of infinite disdain. For a moment her gaze rested on Mangan and her lips parted as though she had intended to speak; but there was no sound. Then she walked to the table.

"How long have you been there?" Mangan demanded, confusion and anger in his voice.

She gave him a scornful look, and then, with her eyes turned from him: "Ever since you requested me to retire to my room." After a slight pause she added: "It is indeed unfortunate that there should be such disagreement between you. First I, unhappily, am the cause of your quarrel, and now a glass of wine. *Bien!* Give it to me; perhaps both causes of disagreement can be removed by so simple an act. I shall drink it gladly."

MANGAN held the glass from her. His lips were twitching and there was an ugly look in the half-closed eyes. "You shall not drink it," he cried. He turned to Bush. "Leave my house, sir, and thank your God that I have spared your life."

"Easy, easy, monsieur. An hour ago your order would have perhaps been justified. Now, however, I refuse, until this little matter is settled."

Mangan laid the glass on the table and

took a step toward Bush; but the latter again leaned against the chair-back, the irritating smile still bending the corners of his mouth. What Leroy Mangan purposed can never be known. But at that moment he heard a movement behind him. Like a startled cat he flung himself toward the table. Across it stood Virginie and in her uplifted hand the glass sparkled in the light.

"So!" An odd smile, sneering and malevolent, seared his face. "So!" Mangan continued. "You defy me. Drink, mademoiselle, be it for love or for death; I shall not restrain you."

Slowly, her eyes on the faces of the two men who stood shoulder to shoulder across the table, Virginie raised the glass. In Bush's brain there was a seething that for the second left him powerless. Would Virginie in desperation drink the poisoned wine? Was it, after all, poisoned? Then he saw the smooth, round arm, the glass, and above it the great dark eyes with the tragic appeal that he had once before fathomed in their depths. With a scream of warning he dashed around the table; his outstretched hands clutched hers. With a tinkling crash the glass shattered on the table top.

In his arms Bush felt her body tense and cold. Her head was thrown back against his shoulder. He looked down into her face; the lips were parted, and in a whisper that sounded loud in the still room he heard her speaking.

"It was true," she said wearily. "From the door I saw him stir the powder in the glass. Then he brought it to you. I warned you."

Mangan was fumbling with one hand beneath the table. He pulled out the drawer and his fingers sought for something among the loose papers that filled it.

"Quick!" She gave a frightened cry and tore herself from Bush's arms. "The pistol, there!"

It was none too soon that Bush received the warning. There was no time even to reach for his own weapon. Even while Mangan still groped among the papers he was upon him. Then in Mangan's hand he saw the glint of steel. He had found it. The table shook as the two men crashed violently against it. With his left hand struggling with the right wrist of Mangan, Bush sought his adversary's throat with his

right. His left hand had slipped down until he, too, held the pistol. Once he felt it pressed against his side but he thrust it from him. Locked in their struggle, they reeled against a chair which crashed beneath them. Lithe as an animal, Mangan writhed and twisted. In Bush was the strength of youth, but in the lean body of his adversary he felt a power, the existence of which he had never dreamed; a sinuous, baffling power that equalized their strength.

Once Bush wrenched his hand upward; almost within his touch was the corded, panting throat. His fingers tore at it but Mangan forced back his hand. In his face he felt the hot breath of Mangan. The sweat poured from his body; with a rending sound his coat ripped from his shoulder.

Back and forth in the dim room they struggled. Mangan was now half naked to the waist; his lean, white body glistened in the soft light. Backward he reeled against the table. His strength was yielding. Youth, that unconquerable ally, stood at the shoulder of the younger man. Slowly the long body bent backward. Above him the face of Bush seemed as the face of an avenging angel.

There was a tremendous roar and a flame leaped from the locked hands beneath the table rim. Acrid smoke filled the air. Mangan had fired, but still the supple body pressed down on his now yielding strength. With a twist Bush tore loose his right hand from the other's grasp; the fingers seized a leaden inkwell and raised it above the white, drawn face that was now gazing up at him from the dark gleaming mahogany. And then straight between the eyes down crashed the massive metal block. With a quiver Mangan's muscles relaxed, his arms dropped useless. Swaying unsteadily, Bush lifted himself upright. Mangan's face was bright with scarlet blood; without a sound his limp body slid from the table to the floor.

"Virginie!"

She stood beside him. "I dared not try to aid you." She dropped to her knees beside the body which lay in the table's shadow. "He is not dead?" she cried. Her fingers sensed the heartbeat of the bare hot breast. "No, he lives!"

Bush lifted her to her feet. "Come! There is no time to lose."

Even as he spoke there was the sound of

running feet in the hall, the tapestry parted and a black face peered with staring white eyes into the room.

"Back!" Bush shouted.

Bending, he snatched the empty pistol from the floor and leveled it at the door. The face disappeared and the opening closed.

"We must go now," he whispered, "while there is yet time."

With the pistol butt he shivered the glass globe that surrounded the candles, and extinguished them. Calm and white the moonlight fell in wide bars of light across the room. Mangan lay in the shadow of the table, with his feet protruding into the light, two small, black-shod feet motionless as in death.

THEY turned to the open door that led to the garden but already a tiny light bobbed among the trees. From the servants' quarters in the rear some one was coming with a light. Bush ran to the door through which he had entered. The moonlight bathed the dark mangoes with silver; beneath them slept the night.

Half supporting Virginie, he ran across the strip of silent turf. They were now in the shade of the trees, but her dress showed very white against the darkness. Their feet crunched sharply on the graveled drive. Ahead, between the gateposts, was the road, bright in the moonlight. Behind them in the house a wild negro cry of terror startled the stillness; lights flashed in the darkened windows; there was the sound of excited voices.

A cluster of banana trees leaned long, broad fronds across the road and in their shadow Bush stopped and drew the girl into his arms.

"Beloved," he whispered, "Luke waits for us. The brig is ready to put to sea." He buried his face in her hair and breathed its fragrance. "Will you go with me? Will you be mine, forever?"

She did not answer, but he felt her head sink back; he saw her face white in the dim light; he felt the sweetness of her lips. His arms crushed her to him and her heart beat palpably against his bare breast where the coat had been torn from him. Then he felt her warm body grow suddenly limp and yielding, and he lifted his head as though in defiance of the world.

"Come, we must not linger; already perhaps they are following." He caught an arm about her waist and half running, half walking, they hurried down the road in the moonlight.

From the trees beyond a broken wall a dog barked sharply and ran yapping to the gate. Then far behind them Bush heard faint but clear in the silence a voice. The sound inspired a new vigor, and he began to run. At his side he heard Virginie breathing heavily and his own breath was rasping in his throat.

The road bent slowly to the right and crossed a stone culvert. From the sea a coolness struck their heated faces. Bush had marked the place mentally; it was half-way between the house and the waiting boat.

He stopped and listened, panting for breath. Ahead, clinking on the metaled road just beyond the turn, was the sound of horses' hoofs. The sound grew suddenly loud and clear, and then two horsemen turned the corner, riding abreast, black figures in the night. Bush seized Virginie in his arms and turned toward the shadow of the trees along the road, but he was too late. Her white dress shone like a light in the moonshine.

"Stop, there," a voice called in French.

In the mad impulse of flight Bush kept on toward the cover of the roadside; again the voice called and the clatter of hoofs following told him that the horses had been spurred forward. At the edge of the road he paused. A bold front might carry off the situation.

"Who are you," he demanded in the same tongue, "that you should stop a man who walks in the moonlight with his sweetheart?"

The man on the horse laughed. "Come into the moonlight," he demanded. "It is late for love-making on the highway."

In the circle of his arm Bush felt Virginie trembling. Then she flung his arm from her shoulder and walked toward the horsemen. Her voice struggled to steady itself into an even tone.

"If you must know, I am Virginie Goutier, the ward of Monsieur Leroy Mangan. Is it necessary that I must report myself to any man whom I meet on the highway before the door of the house of my guardian?"

There was a momentary silence. "Perhaps," said the other man, who had not yet

spoken, "we have been in error to have halted you but, mademoiselle, the roads of Le Cap at this hour are at best unsafe. You would do well to return to the villa of Monsieur Mangan. You are far in your walk from the gate."

Bush silently regarded the two horsemen as they sat motionless in the moonlight. They were in uniform, for the cold light glittered on the epaulets and caught glints of fire from polished buttons and sword hilts. Now and then their faces lifted as they spoke and he saw that they were men of color, officers of the Emperor, returning doubtless from some late celebration in the town.

"*Bien!* Let's on! Pardon, mademoiselle. Our regards to Monsieur Mangan!" He touched his horse with the spur and the animal sidled toward the roadside. "Eh, what?" There was another tone to his voice. "Monsieur, there, out into the light with you."

Stolidly Bush stood his ground. The man who had spoken reined his horse nearer.

"Philippe!" he called. "This fellow here, have a look at him." The two men rode nearer.

AS THEY inspected Bush, puzzled by the torn coat and the signs of his recent encounter, there was a sound of running feet coming down the road. Bush heard it, but there was no indication of his consciousness of this new danger. Escape was yet possible; a quick dash into the dark cover of the trees and then a cautious retreat to the waiting boat. If he were alone that would be a chance at which he would not hesitate, but he gave no consideration to the thought. With Virginie it would be impossible. There was a loaded pistol in his belt, but the two horsemen had already sensed the situation and the one whom his companion had called Philippe already had Bush covered.

"Run! The servants are coming." He heard her voice in his ear, but already the pursuers were in view, two dark figures coming swiftly along the moonlit road.

"It is too late," he answered. Protectingly he drew her to him, his arm about her shoulders. "Don't be afraid; there will be a way out, somehow."

She clung to him. In spite of the hopelessness of the situation there was something

in his calm and quiet assurance that gave her confidence. It was perhaps that curious combination, the Quaker imperturbability and the romantic daring; the blending of cool sagacity and impassioned action.

As they approached, the two colored servants appeared to hesitate. Then they saw Virginie's white dress and the uniforms of the two horsemen. In an instant a torrent of explanation burst from their lips. Mangan had been murdered! In passionate French sentences they narrated the details, and the story sounded black enough even without embellishments.

Bush shrugged his shoulders. "Let me speak, gentlemen," he addressed the two officers in French.

"Enough of this exaggeration. I and Monsieur Mangan disagreed and blows were given. That I would have escaped, I do not deny; nor shall I conceal the fact that this lady was to accompany me. There are authorities in Le Cap Française to whom I shall be taken; let us be about our business, if that is your intention."

The calm, even voice was not without effect. He put his other arm about her and drew her close to him.

"Virginie, you must return. Be brave." Then in a lower voice he whispered: "God protect you, Virginie. Be ready when I come again for you." He felt her lips against his own as her arms drew him down to her.

"Must I go back?" she questioned. "Yes, there is nothing else possible." Then with an impulsive passion she clung to him. "John, John!" she cried softly. "I love you, I love you!"

As he walked down the white road to Le Cap, he glanced over his shoulder; a few yards behind him the two horsemen loomed monstrous. There was no sound but the click of the hoofs on the stony road and the jingle of the bridle chains.

"It is necessary," said one of the riders, "to keep your eyes to the front. And," he added, with an ugly inflection to the words, "the murderer of Monsieur Mangan need expect no quarter if he is so foolish as to attempt escape."

IT WAS with a feeling of perplexity that John Bush awakened the following morning. His mind groped at first for an explanation, for health and youth had given

him a brief but dreamless slumber from which he slowly aroused himself; then in a flash the experiences of the past night were vividly recalled and he became acutely conscious of the aching shoulder where Mangan's shot had given him a superficial wound.

From a small window set in the stone wall he could see between the iron bars a patch of blue sky and through the aperture a cool breeze blew steadily, clean and invigorating. Around him the massive walls, dingy and scratched with French names and coarse phrases, supported a low-arched ceiling. Opposite the window was a door of worn mahogany with a small barred opening in its center. The floor was paved with great uneven flags, moist and cold; and set into the wall in one corner was a pair of iron rings to each of which was attached a short length of iron chain. The straw on which he had been sleeping was piled deep and matted in a corner of the cell and he sat up quickly as his nose became conscious of its musty, acrid smell.

Stiffly he got to his feet. His body was sore and aching and his shoulder pained with burning twinges. He regarded his hands, black and grimy in the slanting bar of sunlight, and discovered when he touched his face that the stubble of a beard was all too evident. He walked to the low window and peered through the opening, his lungs drinking in the cool air from the water. Before him in the morning sunshine the harbor extended blue and sparkling far to the east where a smooth green peak reared like a sentinel from the sea. Almost furtively he thrust his face into the deep opening until it was pressed against the bars. Now around the edge of the stone he could see where the *Hercules* had anchored. The blue water glittered empty; the *Hercules* was gone. Perhaps she had been brought nearer to the land; more likely, she was standing out to sea. The jutting stones and iron bars made it impossible for him to see.

With his eyes fixed on the distant shore, he recalled the last few hours of the previous night. He wondered how Mangan fared that morning. He could not have killed him. Hard as was the blow he had struck with the leaden inkwell, it was not a blow that carried death. It would leave a mark, however, on that cold, impassive face, an ineradicable mark. The thought pleased him.

At the edge of the town his captors had awakened a guard of soldiers; black, barefoot and half dressed, the guard had stumbled out of the thatched shack where they had been sleeping, guns with fixed bayonets trailing noisily. He was a criminal, a murderer, caught with considerable difficulty, so the officers implied, a dangerous man whom they should watch carefully. He had demanded that Monsieur Samatan be notified, but they had laughed at him. Still, he reflected, Samatan would know soon enough; it would not be long before all Le Cap learned of what had happened.

With his hands tied behind him he had been hurried down to the old fort, a bayonet now and then pricking him forward when his feet lagged defiantly. And now from a barred window he regarded the empty bay. He walked across the room and put his shoulder to the door; it was locked firmly; there was no give to the iron-studded planks. A bar of sunlight fell on the stone floor beneath the window. The sun was high; it must be late in the morning.

Purposely he had kept his thoughts from Virginie. That she was safe, he was confident. Leroy Mangan, intuition told him, would not hold against her the escapade of the evening past. He would try to mollify her and win her back to obedience. But what would be Virginie's reaction? Unhesitatingly John Bush knew that she would suffer no retreat. Her words and her eyes had told him; her lips had sealed their covenant.

It was characteristic of his nature that he would even yet hold her apart from the situation which involved him, although she was the central figure in all that now concerned him. All his life he had lived with men and the inheritance of his Quaker ancestry had given him a coldness of manner that his life had intensified and hardened. But beneath this austerity that found its only apparent relief in occasional displays of reckless daring burned the fire of a romantic nature of which he alone recognized the existence. Often in the lonely hours of solitude in his cabin or on the heaving deck of the brig he had allowed his imagination to draw himself the central figure in desperate adventures in which always figured a girl of his own imagination, a girl such as he now saw in the living body of Virginie.

Strange as were all the happenings of the recent past, there was nothing new in them to surprise him. Never before had he felt the warm moist lips of a woman given freely to his own, and yet often he had imagined that delicious moment; so often and so clearly that it seemed a realization of something he already knew. Not yet had he given himself entirely to Virginie; there was a surface that he had not broken through that still separated them. Not yet had he bared to her the hot love of his passionate inner nature.

THERE was a sound of feet in the passage and two voices indistinct through the thick walls. Then a key scraped, feeling for the lock; it clicked in the keyhole and the door pushed slowly open.

The jailer and Monsieur Samatan entered. For a moment the two men regarded Bush as though startled by his appearance, and they might well have been, for the young man who confronted them with disheveled and matted hair, unshaven face and torn and bloody coat presented a contrast to the always immaculate Captain Bush whom they had known. Monsieur Samatan was dressed in white linen and carried a closed basket in one hand and a bamboo cane in the other. He handed the basket to the jailer and bowed with a flourish of his broad-brimmed hat.

"I have come," he said, "to the assistance of my friend, although I must be cautious because of the feeling that the injury to Monsieur Mangan has engendered. Gubo"—he pointed with thin, dark fingers to the jailer—"may be trusted. We can speak freely."

"Tell me," Bush broke in, "how serious is this injury that it was my privilege to inflict on Mangan, and what is the price that I must pay? How long can I be confined here? What will happen to me?"

"Leroy Mangan will not die," the other answered, "but feeling is high against you. Pierre Nicholas demands your life and there are others who would have you shot for your attempt on the life of a man who holds great prominence here. Escape is impossible. Could I aid you, I would do so. But that cannot be. I would suggest, my dear captain, that you plead for mercy and forget speedily the unfortunate attachment that has brought this difficulty upon you."

The suggestion brought a flush to Bush's cheek. The thought that such a remark could be made to him by this man of color affronted him. Then he saw in the brown eyes of Samatan a friendliness that he knew to be genuine; it was a look that came out to him like a helping hand; a look that brought his gratitude instantly to the fore. He put a hand on Samatan's shoulder.

"My good friend," he replied, speaking also in French, "I cannot tell you how deeply I appreciate your coming, although what you tell me promises little for my security. You have referred to Mademoiselle Goutier; that is indeed reason for my presence in Le Cap and without her I shall not leave, even if my freedom be given me."

Samatan shook his head sadly. "Captain Bush," he said with evident emotion, "we have been friends, yes? I am a man of color but you have not noticed my black skin; you have seen only my blood, which is red like your own. You have been honorable with me and we have made money together and drunk wine together and we have eaten at the same table. And now you are a prisoner in my country. I cannot tell you how greatly I desire to aid you and how difficult it is for me to do so. Be strong, monsieur, but be not foolhardy. The good God, whom we both know, will not desert you." Then in a lighter tone he continued, taking the basket in his hand and removing the cover. "Here is a fowl and bread, some fruit and a flask of wine. The fare of Gubo is coarse, but the best he can offer you, so I bring you these trifles."

Bush took the basket and set it on the floor; then he clasped the hand of Samatan in his own. "My friend," he said, "I thank you."

Samatan averted his eyes.

"But what have you heard?" Bush continued. "You have not told me all. Tell me the truth; it is a kindness. You know what is my fate?"

The merchant walked slowly across the stone floor and stood looking out through the barred window to the sea. In a corner Gubo squatted on his haunches, a bunch of huge keys that hung from his belt tinkling against the stones.

"I do not know," Samatan said finally, "what has been finally decreed. As yet there is no decision, but, my good friend"—he turned and faced Bush—"if you believe

in the God of your fathers, I bid you pray to him, for from what I hear and from what I know of my people, you will not see Mademoiselle Goutier again, or any others of your friends."

"YOU mean," Bush interrupted, "that whether or not this dog Mangan dies I am to be killed?"

"Yes. You were captured red-handed, monsieur, escaping from an act which can find no justification in the eyes of my people. You were captured in the company of the ward of the man whom you attacked, attempting to abduct her from those who consider themselves her rightful guardians. And in the persons of Captain Nicholas and Monsieur Mangan you have given insult and personal injury to two who are among the highest in the kingdom of Christophe."

"Does Mademoiselle know of what has befallen me?"

"She will know soon enough. Mangan will live. Your assault was painful but not fatal," he added.

Bush glanced at the jailer squatting in the corner. "Perhaps when I am taken from here there will be a chance. A quick dash. My ship; that is she, the *Hercules*; she flies the English flag."

Samatan shook his head. "I carry but evil news, my captain; the vessel of which you speak is gone. At dawn she sailed. You must find another way to your freedom."

"She has sailed!" Bush shrugged his shoulders. "Yes, that was the order. And yet! Huggett—I would not have thought—but then—" He slapped Samatan lightly on the shoulder. "Come, my friend, there are yet cards unplayed although we may not know their faces. Go now. I will not compromise you by your presence here. Perhaps I may need you later. I thank you for your friendship which bade you come."

The two men clasped hands. Gubo, seeing that the meeting was at an end, unlocked the door and pushed open the great oak panel. They were gone, and Bush heard the key click in the lock and the sound of their retreating feet melt into the silence.

Casually he turned to the basket Samatan had brought. Beneath a bit of white cloth was a roasted fowl, two oranges, a half-loaf

of wheat bread and a quart of wine. Then his fingers encountered a knife—a slim sharp dagger blade in a leather sheath. With a furtive glance he concealed the knife in his breast. Then he turned his head quickly, his ears catching hold of the silence. There was the sound of feet in the passage.

EQUALLY silent was the house of Monsieur Mangan that bright morning. From a cloudless sky of burning blue the sunlight flooded the house and garden. In the penetrating light the plastered walls flamed white against the vivid green of banana palms and mangoes.

Monsieur Mangan's bedroom was darkened. It was a great room on the ground floor with white walls and a high ceiling. On one side tall green latticed doors, now tightly closed, opened to the garden, and through the chinks little needles of sunlight penetrated, tongues of still flame, to the inner gloom. Opposite the doors and on the far side of the chamber was an enormous bed of red mahogany designed after the new fashion of the Empire with graceful curved head and foot. The white mosquito bar was drawn back and caught in a brass hook against the wall. Some French chairs and a table, all of red mahogany, one chair placed at the bedside, comprised the furniture, except a massive wardrobe that stood at least eight feet high against the wall on one side of the room.

In the center of the other side and facing the wardrobe was a small white-paneled door. The brass latch lifted quietly and as the door opened Virginie entered and stepped softly across the waxed boards to the bedside. As in death she saw the outline of the long, lean body beneath the sheet.

Tall and commanding as Leroy Mangan invariably appeared, the white expanse of the great bed dwarfed him almost to insignificance. He lay upon his back, his head sunk deep in a single pillow, his face covered, except for the lower half, with a folded napkin. Below the cloth was visible the mouth, a straight, thin line formed by two bloodless lips, and the sharp jaw now blue with stubble of the night's growth. His hands folded on his breast beneath the sheet increased the suggestion of death, an effect which would have been complete

were it not possible to see the even rise and fall of his breathing.

"Virginie!" His quick ear had caught her quiet footfall even before she reached the bedside.

"Monsieur?"

"You will sprinkle some water on this cloth from the basin." His was a strange hard voice, a voice seemingly devoid of tenderness or love or pity, a cold, dead voice, judicial, impersonal. "Perhaps," he said, "you may wish now to explain some things that have happened, in order that I may plan how best to consider the future."

The girl lifted the basin from the table and carried it to the bedside. With slender fingers she spattered the water on the cloth. She did not answer.

HAS this Bush been taken? You will at least answer a question?" There was an unexpected glint in his voice, a hardness that made her instinctively turn from the bed and replace the basin on the table.

"He has been taken," she echoed.

"You are aware that I shall ask the extreme penalty?"

For a moment dizziness caused her to put out her hand to steady herself. A numbness held her body.

"You will ask that?" she answered faintly.

"Can I forget that this man has sought to thwart my wishes, that like a thief he entered my house, that he tried to kill me and escape with a member of my household who, moreover, aided him in his vile purpose?"

She heard his hands rustle the sheet as he unfolded them and thrust them out straight on each side until he lay stark as a heroic crucifix. The thought held her and she cowered against the door as though from a blow.

Back through years of memory she recalled him. To others, he had always been cold, cruel and unforgiving. But she had never before associated this aspect of the man with herself. To her he had been a distant yet splendid person whose casual caress had warmed her affection. Never had she forgotten her obligation; to him, she admitted, she owed all. One incident alone stood out from the even retrospect; that was the night he had told her of his decision that she should become the bride of Pierre

Nicholas. She remembered the stifled cry of terror that had escaped her lips, how she had fled finally to her small white room and on her knees sobbed out her misery before the ivory crucifix above her bed. It had relieved her, that impassioned hour of communion. But she had risen from her knees mentally numbed into a blind fatalism. She had tacitly accepted her guardian's edict, but in her inner heart she knew that the good God to Whom that evening she had wept out her prayer would never permit the final fulfilment. And so with a blind, unreasoning, unheeding faith she had gone on, accepting the burden of each day, buoyed by the hope of an ultimate and miraculous liberation.

She recalled in a passing flash of thought the evenings that Nicholas had spent in the house of her guardian. Not once had she permitted the slightest breakdown of the barrier. She realized that the suave Pierre Nicholas felt embarrassment in her presence, and she raised higher the wall between them. To him she was inaccessible, incomprehensible.

Then came that evening when John Bush had walked across the waxed floor of the candle-lighted room and his clear blue eyes had sought her own. The touch of his hand had sent a tremor through her. Vaguely she wondered if this was the answer to her prayer; if this Yankee sailor in his bright-buttoned blue coat was the hand of God stretched down for her deliverance. She remembered him vividly from the years before when he had visited Le Cap. With the passion of budding womanhood she had seized upon him and heroized him in her daydreams, her lover and her champion. Ever since she had first met him, two years ago, she had played with his memory. So in the very hour of her need he had come to her. Surely he had come by the dear God's direction.

Wearily she regained control of herself. She felt weak but strangely calm and composed.

"Virginie!" The low incisive voice startled her. She crossed the room to the bed.

"There is something I can bring to you?" she asked.

"No. It is this: Until you receive my permission, you will not leave this house. Under no circumstances will you try to communicate with this man or with any

one concerning him. You will obey me implicitly?"

"I shall not promise."

From the bed came no sound or movement. She watched the lean jaw protruding from the damp napkin and the thin, firmly closed lips. She knew those lips. Not a month past she had watched them close in silence. That was the last night she pleaded with him to release her from his promise to Nicholas. At first she had sensed his weakening. In a cold way Mangan loved her as an austere father loves his child. But his resolve could not be shaken; he had closed his ears to her entreaties.

Mangan's long, white fingers groped along the sheet for the bell cord. Bending slightly, she put the green tassel in his grasp. Far off in the house she heard the metallic jingle as he pulled the cord.

That was all then. She knew he would not speak again. "I am going," she said. "If you require me, I shall be in the drawing-room. The doctor will come again in the evening."

In the hall she met Lucien, her guardian's manservant, a small black man whose snow-white hair and wrinkled face gave an indication of his great age. He was barefoot but wore long and heavily starched white cotton trousers and an old plum-colored velvet coat which had been at one time the property of his master. The old man shrank back against the wall as Virginie passed, two rolling, white eyeballs following her as though he expected to see in her some new and unexpected apparition as terrifying as the happenings of the night before.

As though suddenly recollecting something, he lifted a black finger to his lips, his frightened eyes still rolling grotesquely.

"Mademoiselle Virginie, man waiting to see you in my house." His voice was a rasping whisper and the French words came almost incoherently from his toothless gums.

THERE was no door to the cabin, built against the wall with half a dozen others; the small whitewashed buildings with their thick-thatched roofs of palm presented a row of open doors to the hard-trodden strip of earth that was the recreation ground of Mangan's servants. Now

only three small, naked black children played quietly in the shade.

It was dark inside the cabin and for a few seconds she stood in the door frame adjusting her eyes to the half-light. Then she saw a gigantic negro rise from a bench in the corner and advance toward her. She had never seen him before and instinctively she shrank back a little. Then she noticed a look in the brown eyes that reassured her.

"Who are you?" she asked.

The man raised a hand and pointed at his mouth. Then he shook his head violently and a queer clucking sound came from his throat. With slow fingers he fumbled in his belt and produced a crumpled paper. Eagerly Virginie took it and spread it out.

If you would save the life of your friend you must not delay. It is within the power of either Monsieur Mangan or Captain Nicholas to spare.

A FRIEND.

Impetuously she raised her face to the negro, a dozen questions on her lips, but the mute shook his head. Again she read the paper. Vaguely she realized that vengeance moved swiftly at Le Cap.

"Can you understand me?" she asked. "Can you hear?"

The negro's thick lips parted from his gleaming teeth and he nodded, smiling in affirmation.

"Remember then," she continued, "no one must know that I have seen you except the friend that sent you. Tell him, whoever he may be, that I shall do all that I can. You cannot speak, but you can hear. They will question you. You will shake your head, yes. You understand?" He nodded again. "You will perhaps see Captain Bush? Yes? . . . Then, if he asks you, I am well and no harm will come to me. He must not risk his life again for me."

She turned and retraced her way beneath the leafy roof of the garden path to the house. Who this strange negro was or whence he had come did not for the moment occur to her. Her mind could grasp only the single thought which those few written words implied. The life of John Bush was forfeit and if she would help him her assistance must be immediate. Leroy Mangan and Pierre Nicholas—either of them could save him. But would the man who had been assaulted in his own house aid his enemy? There were men who even under

such a circumstance might be moved by her entreaty, but not Leroy Mangan. Nicholas? Perhaps; there lay her solitary hope.

In the dining-room Lucien was setting the table. It must be noon, then. The day was half gone. Already probably John's fate had been decided. Perhaps by sunset all would be over. The horror of the situation seized her with all its terrible significance; her helplessness, the fate that awaited her and particularly the fate of this man who had become to her a personification of all the strength and beauty and love of which she had ever dreamed.

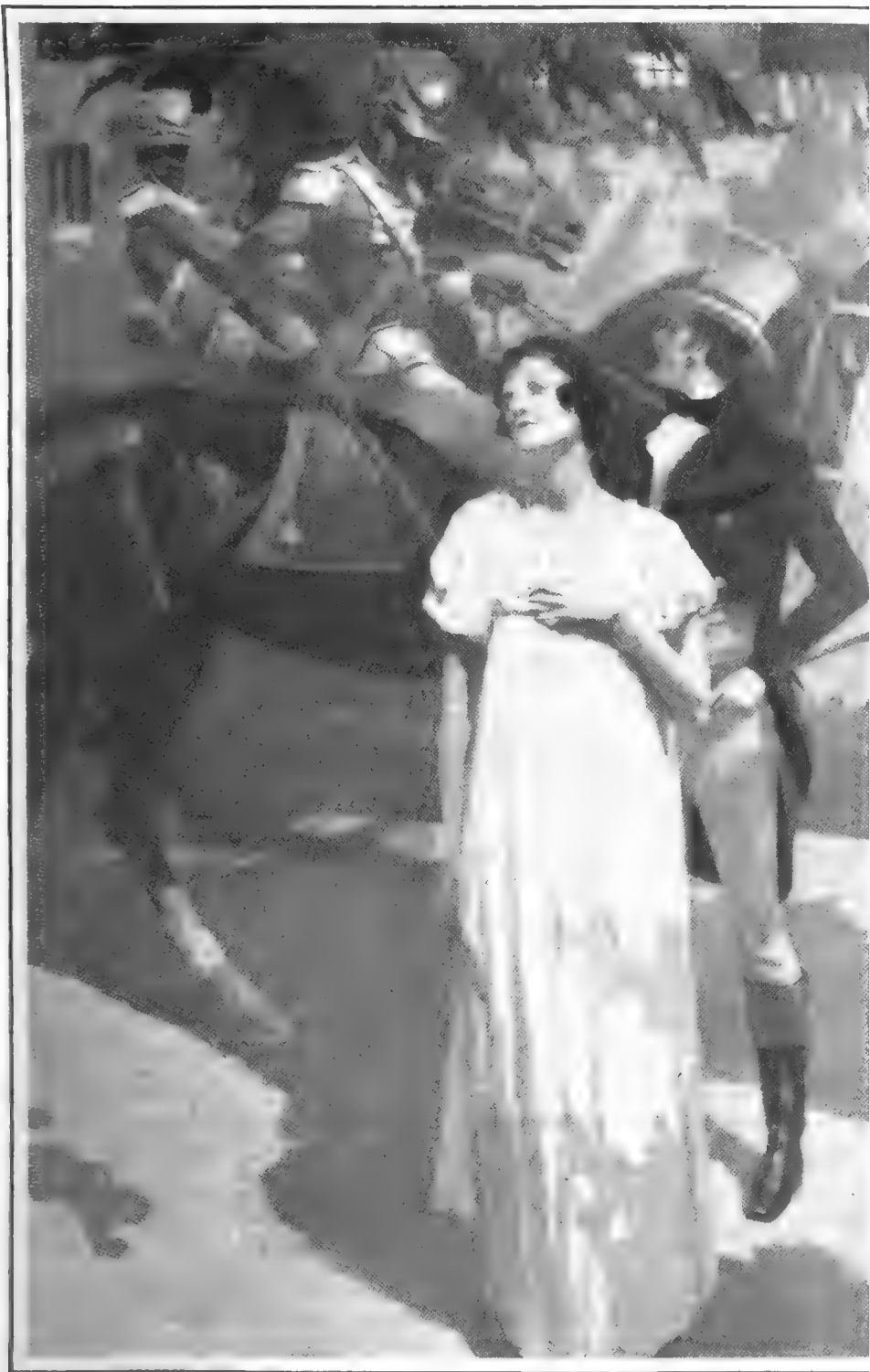
THE sound of a horse's hoofs startled her.

Some one was coming up the drive. There was silence. Then a man's step scraped on the floor of the vestibule. She could hear it plainly in the stillness. The steps came down the hall. In a moment the tapestry would be parted and he would enter the room. Only a few of her guardian's most intimate friends came so uncereemoniously. She turned her head as she heard the rustle of the tapestry. Pierre Nicholas stood in the doorway, mopping his beaded forehead with a yellow handkerchief. He was immaculately dressed in the uniform of the bodyguard of the Emperor; high black boots, white breeches, and a green coat heavily ornamented with gold. His waistcoat was of cream-colored satin with brass buttons, and the high white stock about his neck met in a heavy ruffle of soft white fabric.

"Mademoiselle," he said, bowing low, "a vision in white in this quiet house is cooling on so hot a day. I trust that you are in health and happiness."

Virginie studied him and his glance dropped before the gaze of her deep dark eyes. She saw before her in the doorway a man of perhaps five and thirty; tall, well built and alert in his every movement, his sallow face slightly inclined to heaviness. His hair was black and straight, the nose narrow above but widened slightly too much at the nostrils; the mouth was large and the lips, full and sensuous, were drawn back slightly from a row of perfect teeth; the chin was heavy and there was an indication of fatness about the jowls. His skin was white, but indefinably the native strain was evident.

"Will you please be seated?" she said



"Who are you," demanded Bush, "that you should stop a man who walks in the moonlight with his sweetheart?"

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finally. "There is something I would say to you."

With a slight indication of surprise he walked across the room and sat down before her.

"You are, of course, aware of all that has happened in the last few hours?" The color was gone from her face and her nails whitened as her fingers clenched the table rim.

"Yes, the story of these unhappy occurrences has been brought to me."

"I love Captain Bush."

Nicholas had not expected her statement. His heavy face twitched with agitation. With a forced calmness he said: "I can imagine that a more than ordinary interest in this man prompted your action—may I say, mademoiselle, your most ill-advised and incomprehensible action."

"What is to be the fate of Captain Bush?"

A look of malevolent satisfaction glinted in Nicholas's eyes. He did not answer her question immediately, but watched the bar of sunshine that lay like glowing metal on the floor before the door. Then he answered almost casually:

"The captain, this Bush, has now twice offended. He has without provocation attacked an officer of the Emperor, and later, last night, he attempted the murder of Monsieur Mangan in his own house and the abduction of his ward. He is now a prisoner in Fort Picolet. It is ordered that he be shot at sunset."

A gasp, a quick intake of her breath, came from the girl's lips. She swayed slightly, then she flung herself into the great stuffed chair of Leroy Mangan and her body quivered with the torment of her emotion. Nicholas got up and walked to her side and laid his hand on her shoulder. As though touched by a hot iron she recoiled. Like a wounded animal she cowered deeper in the chair as though to escape him.

"Calm yourself, mademoiselle. This frenzy cannot save your lover. There are other things that can do more. Let us talk sanely and perhaps to some purpose."

SLOWLY Virginie straightened herself. Her dress had slipped from her shoulder but she was unconscious of the smooth, white curves that it disclosed. With a steady gaze of appraisal, Nicholas regarded her. His eyes were fixed on the white skin;

he saw her breast rise and fall beneath the sheer bodice.

"He is to die today," she repeated, "at sunset?"

"Yes, mademoiselle, unless—"

"Unless—" the word came from her with a little cry. "You mean, monsieur?"

"You have forgotten our wedding day?"

"Our wedding day?" She repeated the words without understanding.

"It has been set for Easter—"

"If I die by my own hand, I shall never marry you!" Her voice rose in a high scream as she spoke. "No, never! Oh, the very thought is impossible! You, you—I hate you! I loathe you! I shall die before you touch me. Go!" Quivering, she regarded him, a flame of terror and anger scorching her cheeks.

"Softly, mademoiselle. Hard words are evil messengers. You would save the man you love? *Bien!* That yet is possible. I would marry you." He leered at the bare shoulders. "There are reasons other than yourself. Our wedding day is long to wait for. A week, perhaps, and so you will promise me, and this Bush lives! *Oui?* You say you love him, and you loathe me, Pierre Nicholas, intimate of the Emperor. How much do you love?"

Her momentary passion had passed. Dumb and stunned, she looked at him. The shifting eyes dropped before her. With an attempt at nonchalance, Nicholas flicked the dust from his boot-top with the yellow handkerchief.

"You will barter his life for my body?" He did not immediately answer.

"Do you not understand, monsieur, that I do not love you, that the thought of such a marriage is a terror to me and that I love this man whom it is now in your power to save? You ask me to marry you; you desire that? If some esteem for me prompts that desire, can you not be generous and earn my eternal gratitude? Oh, monsieur, I beg of you, I implore you, be merciful!"

Nicholas shifted uneasily in his chair. Then a cunning look came into the shifting eyes.

"You have my proposal, Mademoiselle Goutier. My orderly is at the gate. Time passes. I go now to Monsieur Mangan. Your answer will send my orderly to Fort Picolet and his life will be spared. Persist in your resolve, and I shall not again offer

an alternative. The life of your lover is in your hand. Is it yes or no that I shall hear?" He walked toward the door. "*Eh bien*," he continued over his shoulder, "it is best that this Yankee cur should die. *Oui?*"

"Monsieur," she said, hardly above a whisper, "you will swear by the good God that this is the truth, that his life will be saved?"

"Yes, if—"

"Yes," the word burst from her, "I consent."

With a smile Pierre Nicholas thrust aside the tapestry and walked down the hall to the room of Leroy Mangan.

THE sound of feet that John Bush had heard from his cell grew loud in the corridor. The noise stopped abruptly before the door. An order was given, gun butts rattled on the stone, a key clicked in the lock.

The young lieutenant who entered wore a worn, green uniform and a gilt scabbard hung at his knee; the bare sword he carried in his hand. He was a tall, thin-hipped, wide-chested negro with skin so black that his face might have been cut from a block of ebony. Behind him a guard of six men stood at shambling attention.

"Monsieur Bush," he said courteously in excellent French, "you will accompany me, if you please. The commandant desires your immediate presence." He bowed and Bush returned the formality.

The little room to which Bush was escorted was damp and odorous. On the whitewashed walls, names and obscene French words and phrases were scratched or written with charcoal. Through the narrow windows was a glimpse of the green of palm trees and a fragment of blue sky. Dirty straw littered the floor and in one corner a low cot was piled with soiled bed linen. A small table stood in the center of the room, and behind it, in a gilded chair upholstered in crimson brocade, sat Antoine Pelletin, commandant of the garrison of Le Cap Française.

In the slanting light from the windows Bush saw a small man with close-cut gray hair and a face striking for its unmistakable stamp of cruelty. He was not so black as the young lieutenant of the guard; there was an ashen color to the wrinkled skin that hung in pouches beneath the yellowish

eyes, an ashen color accentuated by a stubble of gray hair on the broad square jaws and across the upper lip. The mouth was loose and sensuous and the half-opened lips disclosed a row of teeth sharp and irregular. Then he raised his head and regarded Bush with a look in which hate and satisfaction were clearly dominant.

"You are convicted," General Pelletin began as though he read from the paper in his hand, "of assault with intent to kill on the person of the Emperor's officer, Captain Pierre Nicholas; of attacking with the same purpose Monsieur Leroy Mangan in his own house, which you entered by force; with the attempt to abduct the ward of Monsieur Mangan, and with other acts of violence against officers and subjects of the Emperor." He turned his eyes to the lieutenant. "The firing squad at sunset."

Under his torn coat Bush felt his heart pounding; the sweat trickled in hot drops from his forehead. The horror of the situation sickened him. Then he flung back his shoulders. He must not let this man sense his agitation.

"So, I understand," Bush said with a studied slowness, "that I, a citizen of the United States of America, am sentenced to be murdered without trial or hearing. Mark you"—he pointed a finger at Pelletin—"my country will not suffer this insult to pass unpunished."

"Bah!" General Pelletin spat on the straw. "What is it, these bragging United States, a race of traders and upstarts. Do we, who have run the French and the English into the sea, listen to the boasts of an American? Where is your flag? Have not the English driven it from every ocean? Do I fear a country such as that? No!" He glanced at the lieutenant. "To the compound. You have heard."

From the corner of his eye Bush estimated the distance to the nearest soldier. With a leap he could reach the table. He could feel his fingers tighten about Pelletin's throat. It was an idle thought; death would only come the more swiftly. A few hours at least of life remained. The lieutenant touched his elbow. Pelletin's head was bent over the strewn table. There was nothing now that he could do or say; with his head erect he walked out into the corridor; behind him he heard the feet of the guard rustling in the straw.

LE CAP was simmering in the sunshine; even the palm trees seemed to droop in the breathless heat. In the long street that edged the harbor, dust rose from beneath every passer's feet and hung, a yellow cloud, in the air. From the water the sun was reflected as from a sheet of metal, and down from the high, green wall of Le Morne it was flung back again on the stifled town.

Outside the walls of Fort Picolet a dozen negroes crouched in the shade. With languid interest they watched John Bush and the guard emerge from the entrance and turn down the street.

His hands were tied behind his back and Bush could feel the cord bite the flesh. From his forehead salty drops of sweat coursed down into his smarting eyes. His body ached and yearned for rest and sleep. A few hours more, he thought, and then perhaps it would be over, and a long rest begun in a shallow pit on the marshy plain.

Several times in happier days he had ridden past the barracks, a collection of long, thatched buildings against the southern entrance to the city. There also was the wide field of sun-baked clay where the troops of the Emperor drilled, a dusty field, or a quagmire of slimy mud, in accordance with the weather. From the drill ground the plain extended twenty miles to the south, where abruptly the range of towering mountains piled up a precipitous barrier. And there, on a high peak overlooking the plain, was the citadel of the Emperor, and in the green valley of Millot under the shadow of the fortress was the palace of Sans Souci.

The dust caked his tongue and the cord about his wrists pained cruelly. At the roadside people stopped to gaze at him. They were black, of various shades and types of features, and all regarded him with unfriendly eyes. A feeling of despair depressed him. Never had he felt so desolate; in all the world there could be no place so alien and remote as this crowded street of the Haitian capitol. He did not blame them. The terror of the days of French slave rule was all too fresh in their primitive minds. He was just another white man, an intruder in a black man's country won for the black man and by the black man through bloody sacrifice.

A few small ships were at anchor in the harbor. By now the *Hercules* was doubt-

less well out to sea. There would be a breeze there, beyond the island's lee. On the left the water came up close to the road. There was Samatan's warehouse; there the *Lucy* had discharged her cargo. On the right a continuous row of buildings lined the street. There was the Hôtel de la République. It basked in the sunshine; within the closed shutters the air would be cool and damp and there would be things to drink. He could hardly swallow for the dust in his throat.

One of the soldiers pricked him in the back with the point of a bayonet. A tall, black girl at the roadside laughed in a high, clear voice. The ignominy of his position made his face flush hotly. It was at least good to realize that Virginie could not see him, a disheveled captive driven by a band of black soldiers to the place of slaughter. She was safe; he realized that she must be again secure in Mangan's keeping. She had been brave, and she had dared all for him; he felt her clinging lips, her limp, young body in the shelter of his arms. Would she marry Nicholas? Somehow the thought no longer disturbed him. He had felt her courage; he knew her love; he was assured that Virginie would die before she would surrender to Pierre Nicholas.

High, ruined walls flanked the right side of the road. Through tall windows Bush could look at the sky beyond. The masonry was blackened with smoke, the stones cracked with the heat of flames. The roofless rooms of what was once the finest mansion in Le Cap were now tenanted by a dozen squatter families. In that wide doorway Raymond Ferrier had died, holding the entrance against the revolutionary mob that filled the street, a black flood that poured with fire and sword into the frightened town from the distant hills and from the smoking ruins of plantations on the plain where but a few days before they had been slaves.

BUSH often had heard stories of that terrible night. Now it was his turn, but not to die fighting; he was to meet death standing before a whitewashed wall, shot down by a squad of ragged negro soldiers. He wondered when his uncle would hear of it. Perhaps never. No, Huggett would report to him. But perhaps Huggett would not know. What did

it matter? Virginie? He put the thought from him; it could not, no, would not, be withheld from her.

The tall lieutenant ordered a halt in the scant shade of a fig tree.

"Monsieur," he said softly in Bush's ear while the men squatted on the ground, their guns dropped as a child throws down a toy, "it is hot; a minute of rest will refresh you." There was a friendly glint in the black eyes, an expression of pity in his face.

"*Merci!* Can you but loose the cord a little? My hands are swollen with pain." He gave the lieutenant a look of appreciation and a friendly smile curved his lips. "That is better, my friend. I thank you."

Again they marched on. The buildings of the town began to give way to native huts. Ahead was the plain, shimmering with heat waves. There were the barracks. A high wall surrounded a number of buildings, a solid wall of masonry built of blocks of stone evidently robbed from ruined houses in the town. On each of the four corners was a sentry box and in the center of the eastern wall a low doorway gave ingress. A couple of sentries in uniform slouched about the entrance, which was further guarded by two bronze cannon placed on either side and covering the road.

One of the soldiers pushed open the door and in single file they went through it. As Bush passed the shadow of the arch he experienced again the sense of hopelessness that had possessed him when he stood before General Pelletin in the little room in Fort Picolet. It was another step, irrevocably taken, in the progress of his destruction; another door had closed between him and the liberty that had always been the very essence of his existence.

An indescribable stench greeted his nostrils—the sweet, sickish smell of decaying refuse, the smell of a place long frequented by unfortunate humanity. In the shadow of the walls they swarmed like flies, two or three hundred prisoners, men and women, their half-naked bodies decked in the pitiful rags of former garments. With sullen eyes they regarded him, not as a fellow sufferer in their misery but as an enemy, a hated white man. An old woman, her face obliterated by disease, clutched at his coat as he passed and cursed him in a rasping voice. On the distant side of the compound

were the buildings where the more desperate prisoners were confined. It was there, he sensed, that he would be placed.

They crossed the compound and the lieutenant dismissed the guard and conducted Bush to a small room foul with refuse of former occupants. There was no light except through the barred window in the door through which the gloom of the hall feebly penetrated.

The lieutenant put a friendly hand on Bush's shoulder. "I am sorry," he said simply, "that this must be. It is not wise that we should incur the hate of another nation. If your friends hear of this they will be angry, eh? Perhaps a ship of war from the United States will come and ask for you. An answer would be hard to find."

"I am afraid," Bush answered, "that is not likely. We are at war with England. Her great navy surrounds us. There are other matters of far greater importance to the United States than the fate of a single one of her people. You are my friend?"

The lieutenant looked guardedly behind him. The corridor was empty. "Yes, I am your friend, but that cannot save you. At Fort Picolet Monsieur Samatan talked with you, and so I dare to be a friend to you. He knows the order that has been given. Perhaps he can help, for he is strong. He wears the ring of Dessalines. But you have angered Nicholas, and he, too, is a great man."

FROM the compound came a wild cry that filled the little room, a long wail of anguish, terror and anger. It was the sound of human voices, but in it was an animal note that dominated. Higher and higher it sounded. Bush looked inquiringly at the lieutenant.

"What is that?" he asked.

"The prisoners," the other answered. His voice was reluctant and he turned as though to end the interview.

"They cry because—"

"You will hear the guns presently. The condemned are being marched to the wall. They, whom you saw in the compound, sing their death march."

"They will be—"

"Oui, monsieur. It is hard to speak of these things to one who is so soon to take part in them. They go even now to the killing place. Twice each day they march.

Sometimes but one or two, more often many. There is always discontent among the people." Again he looked down the hall and his voice lowered to a whisper. "Christophe is hard on his people. These are political prisoners that die thus. They have talked too freely. They are many."

WILD and terrible, the wailing rose and fell; then as though by the closing of a door the sound ceased. Even more fearful was the silence. Neither spoke. Each waited for the ensuing sound. Quick and jarring came the rattle of a volley of musketry, then a few seconds later three pistol shots. Shrill and piercing followed the scream of hate from the compound. Pandemonium had broken loose.

"It is always so." The lieutenant spoke wearily. "They, too, will die, but in another way. They starve there and the sickness comes. Even the strong man, he does not last; it is too difficult to live. The bullet, it is more quick, and best, perhaps." He put his hand on Bush's shoulder. "I must go," he said. "Courage, my friend!"

Time passed with incredible slowness. Outside the barred door two ragged soldiers stood guard over their prisoner. For a while Bush tried to overhear their muttered conversation, but the few fragmentary sentences that he caught were meaningless. Slowly he paced up and down the little room. The heat was stifling and from the foul floor and its covering of straw came a moist, acrid odor that at times almost overcame him.

Not yet, even, had he recognized the fact that in a few short hours death awaited him. Throughout his life John Bush had constantly experienced dangers that held irrevocable alternatives. With a twisted smile on his lips and a steady look in his blue eyes he had played with life and death daringly. It had been a game to him, this existence that had been thrust upon him, a game in which the highest color seemed to glow when the danger was the greatest. He had made money readily, and he had distributed it again with a free hand. There had been nothing for which he had desired wealth; no one at whose feet it might be laid. Then had come Virginie.

At the thought of her his face softened and he stopped his nervous pacing and leaned against the wall. So, that was

over! If only her problem were as completely solved as his own! He would walk out in the mellow evening light; there would be a volley from the squad of ragged soldiers, and then it would be over. He would not even hear the howls of the prisoners that would follow. That would be all! But Virginie would still face her living death.

There was a scuffling of feet in the passage. Some one was coming; the two soldiers assumed an awkward attitude of attention. A voice inquired the location of the cell of John Bush; he recognized the voice of Pierre Nicholas.

"This is where you keep the white man who is to be shot?" he asked. "*Oui? Bien!* Open the door." The lock was turned and the door opened. "Back there, to the far end of the passage, you!" Nicholas continued to the soldiers. Then he stepped into the cell and pulled shut the door behind him.

"*Bon jour*, Monsieur Bush!" He swept a half-bow at the silent man who stood watching him. "It is unfortunate, indeed, that we meet under circumstances such as these."

Steadily Bush regarded him. There was something in the man's insolence and daring that almost attracted him. Nicholas was the bigger man, but Bush knew his own strength. A sudden rush! It could be done. But Nicholas doubtless was armed. Not otherwise would he dare to close the door behind him and stand alone before a mortal enemy.

"Perhaps you will explain why you are here?" Bush spoke slowly; distrust and scorn were evident in his words.

"Ah, Monsieur Bush, that is simple. With so little left of life perhaps you will listen to friendly advice, eh?"

"Friendly?"

"Is it possible that I could have another motive?" He glanced about the cell. "It is too bad that we cannot sit, and over a bottle of wine, perhaps, talk more easily. You would like to live?"

"Your question is offensive. I have asked no mercy. I would accept none from you. If that is all, please respect the short time left to me. Solitude is infinitely preferable to your company."

The fleshy face of Pierre Nicholas reddened perceptibly and a forced smile disclosed his white teeth. "I am conscious

of your dislike for me, but possibly you would consider the intervention of another. I have talked with Mademoiselle Goutier; we made plans for our wedding day. She is so young, so tender in the heart. It gives her pain that the death of a friend should be necessary at such a time. She has asked me to make other disposition—you understand, eh? Perhaps now you will hear me?"

"I have made my answer, Captain Nicholas." The desire again possessed Bush to reach at the other's throat; a passionate yearning to destroy this creature who taunted him. Would it not be better, he wondered, that they both die here in the mat of filthy straw on the cold damp stones, than that Nicholas should live to carry out his designs? Death waited him a few hours hence against the whitewashed wall. What matter if it came sooner? Then he was conscious that Nicholas was again speaking. He listened to him, his eyes studying the other's throat.

"It is that you will instantly leave this country; that you will never return. Mademoiselle this morning repents her actions; she has asked the forgiveness of her kind guardian and myself."

"You lie!" Bush spat the words from his lips.

NICHOLAS ignored the interruption. "She is tender," he continued, "and begs you to accept your life on that basis. She desires never again to see you."

"I repeat: You lie! That Mademoiselle has interceded for me even to you is possible; the rest is falsehood."

"So you decline, eh?" Nicholas turned slowly toward the door. "You forget, monsieur, that you are young. The world is filled with young women. Is it not childish to throw away your life for one young woman you can never have? It is a fine gesture that you make and a useless one."

"There is the door. You will honor me by availing yourself of it."

Nicholas wheeled suddenly and thrust forward his face. "Bah! You fool! You try to interfere with Captain Nicholas and you see the consequence! I shall think of you on my wedding day. You refuse my mercy. *Bien!* We shall see who is the stronger. The guns shoot and some one digs a hole for you. No, that is not my

revenge. You must be alive; you must say to yourself, 'This is the wedding day of Nicholas.' So! 'This is the night that Virginie becomes the bride of Pierre.' It is not my pleasure to have you dead. No, it is more pleasant for me that on that night you are alive to think of me. You live, or you die; it is as I wish. A week from today I shall be wed. I beg of you to think of me."

As he spoke the last words Nicholas backed swiftly to the door. With a jar it closed behind him. Then for a moment his face appeared in the window. "I hope you will enjoy yourself. It is true that I give you life because a woman has asked it of me. It is yours, such as you will find it."

It would seem only natural that this sudden reversion of Bush's fate would have lifted him, at least for the time, from the despair that had settled about him; but it is to his credit that it was not so much his own life or death that then affected him as the words of Nicholas which told him of the impending marriage. In the main he believed what Nicholas had told him. To be sure, he had detected the obvious falsehood that Virginie had desired him to leave the country; she would sacrifice herself, he knew, for his safety; it was the way that Nicholas spoke that betrayed the lie. But the wedding day—that was different! There was something in the voice of Pierre Nicholas that bespoke verity. And the staying of his sentence beyond that day—there was a fine cruelty in the act. Doubtless Virginie had persuaded Nicholas to exert his influence and delay the sentence, but undoubtedly the girl had never realized the sinister advantage that Nicholas would take of the fulfilment of his promise.

Vaguely he wondered what would happen to him, but always his thoughts turned back to the slender girl with the great dark eyes in whose black depths he had seen burn the glint of love as she had held her face up to him. Again and again he saw her, but never could his fancy complete the picture. There was one sharp detail and then another, and occasionally a haunting, tantalizing vision of her that, when he tried to see it more vividly, faded completely. He could see her mouth, the full, red, parted lips and the white teeth; and now he felt again their warm pressure against his own, and her hair against his forehead. His arms

were about her; her breathing body suddenly became limp as she relaxed in his embrace. . . .

In the compound a tom-tom was beating, a weird, monotonous booming. The cell was almost unendurable with the heat of the afternoon sun that flamed down on the flat roof. He sat down cross-kneed in the corner, faint with the heat, with lack of food, and with infinite weariness.

Again his thoughts recalled the past. Never had he loved before; this was the first expression of the pent-up emotion that he had stifled since boyhood. And because it was the first, it seemed as though his love rushed from him uncontrolled. Suddenly the gates of reserve had been opened; uncontrolled his love poured out from his very soul.

Outside, the wheels of a wagon rumbled in the compound. He heard horses' hoofs.

But Virginie—never before had he imagined a woman could so master his will. Not by any one thing did she hold him; it was the rare blending of her character that had turned the whole direction of his life. In her was all the breeding of ancestry, and the culture of France combined with that tremendous emotionalism that reflected the fire in her soul. She could be calm, gentle, clinging in apparent weakness, and she could grow white with anger, and love with a passion that left him shaken by its intensity. Now she was to become the bride of Nicholas. Clearly he saw and understood; she had bought his life, bought it with her delicate white body.

If only she had let him die! But no! That would not have saved her, unless by her own hand she had chosen to join him in death. In seven days! It was so soon. "Seven days; seven days!" He repeated the words; then he got quickly to his feet. There was the old light again in his wide, blue eyes. Seven long days in which to euvre Fate. Love and life were the stake. Flung in his face was the challenge. In some way he would find her, would save her from Nicholas. Again he saw the great, black eyes, brave but appealing. A smile quivered on his lips.

DOWN the corridor came footsteps. The door opened, and the lieutenant flung his arms about Bush's shoulders. As he began speaking in a voice thick with

emotion, he released Bush and regarded him at arm's length. The black face was alive with gladness.

"*Monsieur! Mon ami*, there is an order from Captain Nicholas, an official order, that your life is to be spared. *Mon Dieu*, it is a miracle that he who hated most should show such pity."

"He has himself told me."

"Ah, he has been here in his mercy. But you do not know." His face grew grave. "It is not freedom yet. On Le Bonnet l'Evêque the Emperor completes his citadel.

Five thousand labor there, of whom many are prisoners. It is there that you are to be taken, monsieur. Be brave; be strong. It is not a certainty of life that has been granted you, for thousands have died at that bitter work; but it is at least a better thing than a bullet, and"—he kicked a hole in the straw—"a grave that is not deep enough to keep out the dogs."

"I go?"

"Now! The day is late. Already the sun is low against Le Morne. Tonight the prisoners march along the highway to Millot and the citadel. It is with them that you will go."

He fished beneath the gay coat of his uniform for something at his belt. "I am sorry," he said, "that it must be so." He held out a slender chain that terminated in bracelets of rusted steel.

Bush held out his hands. The warm smooth circlets embraced them.

"Good-by." The negro held out his hand. "We cannot speak again but perhaps some day we may meet; you may find freedom and you will not forget Jean Riou, who had only friendship to give."

Their hands met. "I shall not forget. I thank you."

"Come." He led the way to the door. "You will walk ahead with the guard."

On either side a ragged soldier fell in beside Bush. No one spoke. With eager lungs he drew in great breaths of the warm air of the corridor. After the stifling heat and stench of the cell, it seemed pure and almost invigorating. A glare of sunlight struck his eyes as they passed through the door to the compound. There in the late light of the afternoon it lay much as he had seen it in the morning a few hours ago, hours that seemed as long as so many days.

Only the black swarm of prisoners had shifted their position; now they clustered in the shadow of the western wall.

With the guard shuffling at his side he marched toward the gate. The thought of escape was uppermost in his mind, but it seemed not the time. Then he began to wonder how they would get to Millot and when the gang of prisoners would start. He was thus speculating when a familiar sound made him look sharply behind him. From the western wall of the compound the weird cry that he had heard at noonday welled louder and louder in the quiet air. More even than the first time he had heard it, was he struck by the strange, animal note in the massed voices. There was no tune or rhythm. It was a wailing sound, plaintive, melancholy, awe-inspiring.

FROM one of the buildings three men guarded by a dozen soldiers walked across the compound at right angles to the direction in which Bush was being taken. Curiously, he watched them approach as their paths converged. All three had their hands pinioned behind their backs, all were hatless and the disorder of their clothes suggested some days at least of imprisonment. They were black, but he who walked in the front showed in his lighter skin a crossing of white blood which was also evident in his almost aquiline features. All were obviously persons of some intelligence and standing in the community.

One of the soldiers turned to Bush, a grim laugh in his throat. "That man there"—he indicated with a toss of his head—"he, all three, go to die!" Then he added, with ignorant awe in his voice, "Christophe is strong."

They passed. "Christophe is strong." The sentence rang in Bush's ears. Like a reincarnated Nero, this black despot ruled his kingdom. Under him the people, ignorant, superstitious and cowed by fear, slaved at his harsh command. The power was placed in the hands of a few chosen officers. And the firing squad, or death in some other form, awaited those who dared question the right and justice of the Emperor.

The sun had sunk well below Le Morne,

Fortune next takes Captain Bush into the perilous presence of that remarkable person, the negro Emperor, Christophe. See August EVERYBODY'S, out July 15.

Everybody's Magazine, July, 1924

which now rose exaggerated in the blackness of its shadows. Behind the clean-cut crest the light of the sunset flamed up into the blue, bars of golden light that radiated and faded imperceptibly, a luminous haze as from the door of a mighty furnace. And now with the evening came a tremor of air from the sea; an air faint, cool and saline that stirred among the fronds of a royal palm before the gate, moving listlessly the green plumes as though with idling fingers.

Inside the gate a dozen men were collected, manacled in twos, wrist to wrist. All were negroes, big powerful blacks with broad shoulders and lean limbs. It was evident that the Emperor fed only prisoners of intelligence to the firing squad and conserved the young and strong offenders for the great building operations with which he was chiefly concerned.

Bush studied their faces. There was no chance of help here. Low-browed, thick-lipped and sullen, they returned his gaze from steady eyes that seemed to reflect no thought or emotion. A few had squatted in the dust; the rest idly regarded their captors or tinkered with their manacles, as a dog will worry with the leash that ties him.

The wailing of the other prisoners had stopped. Arrested by the silence, Bush turned and with his eyes swept the walls of the compound. Even as he looked, from behind one of the buildings came the sound of a volley of musketry and as it died away in a feeble echo against Le Morne a wisp of thin white smoke rose above the roofs and the wild cry of anger and terror burst again from the black throng in the shadow of the wall.

A feeling of mingled horror and disgust made Bush turn away his eyes and look down through the gate to the blue water of the harbor. A little turn of fate and he might now be lying there in the dust. But what was the price of his deliverance? The thought sickened him more than the thought of the death that had been averted. He must not weaken, he told himself; too much depended on his strength and resourcefulness in these brief seven days that awaited him, days fraught with disaster or success.

Farewell Exploit of a Genial Rascal

Mr. Collin's Adventures

*A Pretty Face Brings Collin Within an Ace
of Capture, but a Last-Minute Trick Leaves
His Would-Be Captors Holding an Empty Bag*

By Frank Heller

V. The Blue-Eyed Lie

MR. COLLIN, whose adventures have been related in these chapters, was, in spite of his past and his Bohemian existence, a man of regular habits. When not engrossed by some particular undertaking or deep plan, he got up, took his meals and went to bed with the regularity of clockwork. His opinion was that one must form certain rules and live up to them, if any real pleasure is to be derived from breaking them. Next to living always according to principles, there is nothing, he declared, so boring as to live entirely without them.

For this reason, Mr. Collin conformed strictly if not to the laws of the state, at least to such rules as he made himself, and no one could have kept the annual festivals with more fervor than he. He also observed his own anniversaries whenever he, like Phineas Fogg, had the time to spare; and one of these, the 29th of September, he never omitted.

Was the 29th of September Mr. Collin's birthday?

No, it was the day on which in 1904, after his hapless speculation, he had left Sweden under the shadow of five paragraphs of the Penal Code. Since then, on that day, he had each year communed with himself and toasted his past; and ever since he had taken root in London he spent that evening in a restaurant where he was most likely

to meet his compatriots, sometimes at Oddenino's, and sometimes at Frascati's.

On the evening of September 29, 1910, Mr. Collin paced slowly along Tottenham Court Road toward Oxford Street. He wore an overcoat and under it a dinner jacket, for he was on his way to Frascati's to celebrate his private commemoration. In order to whet his appetite, he had walked through Regent's Park.

Slightly exhausted by his walk, Philip sauntered southward along the broad, square flagstones. His thoughts were far away from the dreary London night. He had called up in his imagination the picture of old Kristinehamn, as he remembered it on long-past September days, when it lay steeped in soft sunshine under a vaporous sky flecked with light, fast-moving clouds. The maple trees flamed in the park and the dark green pines rustled damply. The ground in the forest was covered with mushrooms and over the rough cobbled roads rolled the harvesting wagons, full of prickly sheaves. He saw it all so clearly that it made him smile. The small town, under the ascending smoke of the chimneys, lay dreaming in the autumn haze, the mills on the river mirrored themselves in the dark waters and the hum of the threshing-machines rose and fell in his ears, as he sat in his office at the open window.

He had reached the corner of Oxford

Street. A few steps brought him to the red brick façade of Frascati's and he went into the restaurant, past the obsequious porter, to celebrate the sixth anniversary of the fateful day.

He looked at his watch; it was seven and he was not yet feeling hungry, so he called the head waiter, ordered his dinner, which he wished served in three-quarters of an hour, and entered the refreshment room to stimulate his appetite with a cocktail.

To the strains of the band, which had just begun to play the "Double-Headed Eagle," he sank again into his dream. . . .

Sweden, Sweden, Fatherland—what did the poet say? "The home of my longing, my all on earth. . . ." H'm! He could not wholly indorse this, for he was too much of a cosmopolitan, by birth and by habit, and was rarely troubled with homesickness in the ordinary sense of the word. But nevertheless, there were many threads which bound him to the old country, and there were moments when he felt a longing for its sights, the rustling in the pine forests, the afternoon light in a birch coppice, for the sound of his own tongue. He thought of the notices relating to his disappearance which he had read in Swedish papers abroad. "Regrettable Incident in Kristinehamn—Promising Young Lawyer Frustrates Hopes—Three Thousand Crowns for Information Regarding Collin's Whereabouts." (Does this still hold good, I wonder.) "No Trace of the Escaped Felon." . . .

Philip sniggered. The music changed to "*Quand l'Amour Meurt*" and his thoughts glided imperceptibly into other channels. Visions of a home and a woman and his own particular dream of happiness once more rose before him. He sat in the gloaming in a large drawing-room; pictures looked from the walls on the solid, old-fashioned furniture; everything denoted a distinguished, comfortable bourgeois house. The windows opened on the market-place, giving a glimpse of the early autumn sky; and a light breeze played with the leaves of the music on the piano. A young girl sat there, playing: she was dark and slender and had slim white arms. Her fingers slid over the keys and a faint smile played round the corner of her mouth. Now and then she threw a roguish glance at him, half melancholy, half smiling. . . . Her eyes were

a dark blue, slightly veiled, she was pale and her lips were red. . . .

PHILIP, his head resting on his hand, was lost in thought, when he was suddenly roused by a hesitating voice, which said in Swedish:

"I beg your pardon—are you not Lawyer Collin of Stockholm?"

Philip gradually had acquired such complete control over himself that he seldom if ever showed his feelings. But when he heard these simple words he shivered to the marrow. A thousand apprehensive thoughts stormed through his brain in less than a second: Who can it be? Philip Collin! How long is it since I was called this? With a tremendous effort, he succeeded in pulling himself together and looked calmly at the speaker. What he saw was well calculated to intensify the shock, for in front of him, in a blue tailor-made dress, stood a slim, tall young girl with dark hair, dark brows, a pale complexion and the most magnificent blue eyes. Under the open coat of the suit appeared a low-cut white blouse, from which the graceful throat emerged in softly rounded contour. The blue eyes were directed inquiringly at Philip while an uncertain smile hovered round the charming mouth.

"She is delightful, delightful!" Philip told himself. "All my vanished dreams have materialized—and that it should happen on the very day dedicated to their memory! And am I Philip Collin? Surely, if I deny it I am not worthy of him. Even if, to atone for my crimes, I should have to spend the rest of my days in a penitentiary, for the moment I am Philip Collin."

He rose with quick decision, bowed and said smilingly: "Quite right; my name is Philip Collin and at one time people called me a lawyer in Sweden. But I must confess to something unforgivable. I do not remember. Have we already met?"

She held out her hand and nodded in response.

"You don't remember? Well, that's not astonishing. It is many years since we met at a ball at Consul Bloch's. My name is Sigrid Holten."

"But you must have been a mere child?"

"Seventeen," she returned with a smile.

Philip's brain made a lightning calculation. Stockholm 1899 till 1900 . . . 1910,

what? Twenty-seven years. Incredible yet obviously true. She went on quickly:

"It is dreadful of me to speak to you—but you know what Swedish girls are abroad! And it is such ages since I spoke our tongue. Moreover, we *are* acquainted even though you have forgotten me."

"I shall never forgive myself," answered Philip. "Tomorrow I shall don a hair-shirt and drop molten wax on my bare forearm. But I have not yet recovered from my amazement. How were you able to remember me after all these years?"

"I have always kept you in my memory," she replied calmly, and Philip started.

He suddenly realized that their conversation, as they stood in front of the table, might appear strange to onlookers and he said rapidly:

"Are you alone, Miss Holten?"

She laughed.

"It isn't as bad as all that. I am here with a few English friends from my boarding-house." She hesitated for a moment and then added hastily:

"It would be so delightful to chat with you alone, but this can't be done. Will you join us?"

Philip's distrustful heart played a tattoo of protest. "Don't throw yourself into unnecessary adventures! Fear women, even if they bring you presents! Fear them, Philip Collin, where you do not fear men."

FOR the last five minutes a single enticing thought held sway in his brain: "Is it possible? Doesn't she really know all about you? Are there still people to whom you are Collin the lawyer, and not the fugitive swindler and forger? Her eyes are so honest; her whole appearance seems to breathe confidence—but bah! Ridiculous! She *must* know—must have heard. The whole of Sweden discussed the affair. . . . But she was still so young. Girls hardly ever read newspapers. Perhaps in spite of all that she has heard nothing. Perhaps she still takes me for Dr. Collin, the lawyer with whom she danced at the Bloch ball." While he was still a prey to these conflicting emotions his glance suddenly met that of Miss Holten, which rested on him with an astonished smile; her eyes told him more explicitly than words that though she had asked him to come to her table he had not

yet expressed his consent. He reddened slightly.

"Miss Holten, I am the rudest person on earth, but you have put the clock of time back ten years and I am lost in reminiscence. Do you really want me at your table? Are you adventurous enough to endanger your reputation among your friends in such a headlong fashion? Of course I am coming—if you wish to take the responsibility."

"Just come along," she said quietly, leading him to where her companions were sitting. She made the introductions in the same informal manner.

"An old friend from Sweden, Mr. Collin—Miss White, Miss Armstrong, Mr. Philpott."

Philip bowed slightly, the company at the table responding more coolly still, as with a hidden smile he took his place among them. Little by little the talk became general and Philip exerted himself to shine. But he had not yet recovered his balance: however marvelous Mr. Philpott's experiences, the present meeting was far more miraculous.

Who was this young Swedish girl? Was she what she pretended to be? Was it possible that she should have recognized him after all these years? It was quite true that since his arrival in London he had discarded every disguise and shown himself as he really was; but in any case—was it possible that . . . His brain for the thousandth time speculated about the same questions which had been engrossing it for the last fifteen minutes. His eyes clung to her.

Suddenly the idea struck him that an evening in her company was worthy of better wine than that with which Mr. Philpott was regaling his guests. He lifted his glass and remarked courteously: "Ladies, and you, Mr. Philpott! You have given us many examples of unexpected encounters. Personally I have also experienced many strange meetings, and I was not hoping much from those which still lie before me." He smiled as he thought of the meetings he had in mind. "You must admit that to a disillusioned cynic like myself the pleasure of rediscovering a charming acquaintance like Miss Holten must be all the greater. I should like to celebrate the present occasion in a befitting manner. It was my intention to dine here. May I beg you to

consider yourselves my guests? Miss Holten, I beg you to persuade the ladies and Mr. Philpott to accept my invitation. I am so sure of your success that I apologize in advance for absenting myself to confer with the head waiter."

Philip disappeared for a moment and then returned to the party, which had accepted with alacrity the invitation of such an open-handed host. "Obviously," he thought, "the food at the boarding-house is of the kind which I remember at such places." Dinner was announced shortly afterward and Philip conducted his guests to the table reserved for them.

WITH inward amusement he cast a quick glance at his newly acquired friends. Miss White—the thin one—had launched into a hectic flirtation with him. Miss Armstrong—the guileless one—wasted her timid glances in his direction. And Mr. Philpott began to criticize a speech which Mr. Lloyd George had made that afternoon. In these surroundings Miss Holten looked like a young goddess, proud, free and self-assured. When by chance her eyes met those of Philip she smiled spontaneously and with understanding, so that his heart for a few moments missed a beat. If he had been her brother she could not have looked at him with more candor.

Frascati had surpassed himself; oysters, cold consommé, trout and woodcock, everything was excellent; and in accordance with Philip's instructions there was a continual flow of champagne. The conversation grew lively, even noisy. Miss White's optic flirtations began to assume gigantic proportions: Miss Armstrong giggled and chattered restlessly; whereas Mr. Philpott contented himself with an occasional ponderous sentence.

Philip's glance continuously sought Miss Holten. In the storm and stress of Miss White's advances, her clear bright eyes were a harbor of safety, and her slow, thoughtful answers an oasis in the desert of Miss Armstrong's empty chatter. After a time, the conversation in some inexplicable manner turned on the subject of criminals and their arrest. Giving it the twist which he desired, Philip furtively watched his young compatriot.

"I long for all criminals to be delivered to justice," exclaimed Miss White. "Is it

not dreadful to think how often they escape? Just think, if Crippen had not . . ."

The breathless chase across the Atlantic had just been engaging universal attention.

"Just think how easily he might have escaped!" remarked Miss Armstrong.

"A really clever criminal need never be discovered," stated Mr. Philpott with decision. The *Daily Mail* had expressed this opinion that very morning.

"What do you think, Miss Holten?" asked Philip, twirling the stem of his champagne glass between his thumb and forefinger.

"I do not know," she replied with a smile. "I have not followed these things since I have been abroad, and at home we have no criminals."

"Oh! What a wonderful country Sweden must be!" said Miss White, sighing and glancing coyly at Philip.

"At least, no real ones as far as I know," added Miss Holten, and Philip sought in vain for a shade of self-consciousness in her voice. "By the way, I am not quite sure that I agree with you, Miss White."

"What!" exclaimed the latter, horrified. "You do not want all criminals to be found out?"

"I don't know; I have never thought much about it. But I suppose if they want to try and lead a new life—"

"A new life! A new life!" repeated Miss White sneeringly, and drained her glass to the bottom. "So you would not do all you can in order to help justice, if you could?" (Miss White was slightly befogged by the champagne and her syntax suffered accordingly.)

Miss Holten, holding a grape between her fingers, considered this for a moment. Then she smiled and shrugged her shoulders.

"I have always been so lazy, Miss White, that I hardly think I should take the trouble."

Silence reigned for a few moments during which Philip's eyes were glued to Miss Holten's face. Was there some hidden meaning in her words? Then the conversation turned on other subjects; it was time to break up the party and the guests, glass in hand, thanked their host. Miss Holten drank Philip's health unaffectedly, giving him his full title, Dr. Collin, in Swedish, with a straight look from her blue eyes. Again Philip shivered when he heard the

familiar address. The warning voice in his heart was nearly silent; almost had he begun to believe that the miracle was possible. In any case . . .

When they all rose, he managed to escort her to the door. Miss White, Miss Armstrong and Mr. Philpott preceded them.

"You do not mean—" began Philip in an uncertain voice.

"No, I do not mean that," she replied. "If I did I should not have sought your company. Shall we say the day after tomorrow, near the Marble Arch? At half-past two?"

Philip bowed his assent and glanced at her in a way which he felt disclosed too much. It was ridiculous that a man like himself should be bewitched by this little girl whom he did not know, and whom he had seen tonight for the first time—Stockholm ten years ago did not count.

AFTER that, two days passed over Philip's head like a dream, for on the day following the supper at Frascati's he met Miss Holten—whether by accident or by the decree of Fate remains to be seen.

She was on her way to Westminster Abbey, alone, and Philip, whose caution had flared up in the morning, felt it petering out the moment he set eyes on her. They had attended evensong together; and as they passed through the streets, she had been quieter than the night before; and her manner had been so sincere, so frank, so fascinating that by degrees his heart relinquished all its resistance.

Long before half-past two on the next day he stood near the Marble Arch, counting the minutes and trembling with anxiety lest she might have changed her mind at the last moment. She arrived at last, and at her suggestion they drove to Kew, that wonderful old park with its exotic conservatories. It was glorious. The moist blue September haze lay on the trees and the wide lawns: the wind which swept over them carried a delicate scent of mustiness and, between the branches, the sunlight poured down in a heavy stream of molten gold. Miss Holten and Philip sauntered through the park and the hothouses and suddenly, while Philip was on the verge of stammeringly declaring that no palm was slimmer than she and that no plant had

such blue blossoms as her eyes, she interrupted him with a little pout and confessed that she was hungry.

"Ye gods! Hungry! This fascinating woman is hungry. You are a scoundrel!" Philip's conscience thundered at him and he admitted it penitently, stuttering clumsy excuses with the tongue which had once upon a time bewitched his colleagues with smooth eloquence. He led her to the waiting taxi. "Carlton?" he suggested. But she demurred at once.

"That's too grand! Can't we go somewhere where we can be more by ourselves?"

"More by ourselves!" Philip's heart exulted. "Yes, yes! . . . Café Dauphin," he told the chauffeur, and off they drove.

About six o'clock they sat at one of the small tables of the restaurant. Slender wax candles fought the on-coming darkness, and mirrored themselves in the lacquered Japanese screens which shut them off from the rest of the world. Dimly glowing fruit—peaches, large yellow pears and sweet bluish grapes of huge dimensions—made a picturesque background for the choice dinner which Philip had conjured up with good words and generous tips. At last they sat over their coffee and liqueurs. Philip took out a cigar and hesitatingly held out his cigarette case to his companion.

"Thank you," she said. "It is nice like this, just the two of us." As he offered her a wax vesta and their hands touched to light the cigarette, a sweet and sharp sword seemed to pierce Philip's heart.

Philip's distrust was asleep and Philip himself was in love, madly in love.

Suddenly she put a question to him which dragged him back to reality.

"You probably think me horribly forward," she said. "First I jump on you at Frascati's and now unceremoniously I invite myself to dinner with you."

"You are enchanting," said Philip with a dreamy look.

"Yes, but I still have to explain why I was hungry. Before we met I had taken a long walk. I am sure you will never guess where I went."

"Bond Street," Philip suggested at a venture.

"First—and from there to Scotland Yard. That is, I did not find it."

PHILIP recoiled as if he had been boxed on the ears, and in a moment all his suspicions took on a new lease of life. He had, metaphorically speaking, the enviable gift of seldom closing both eyes at once, either asleep or in love—though in the last days he had very nearly succumbed.

"Scotland Yard," he repeated to himself three times, with an ironical intonation on the three fateful syllables. But his face only expressed polite concern, as she rapidly continued:

"The fact is that this morning I was robbed while I was out shopping. I went to Peter Robinson's and to Liberty's, and after that I stopped in front of some shop windows in Bond Street. Somebody must have taken the opportunity, for suddenly when I looked into my bag I found it was empty."

"Empty! Without your noticing it?" echoed Philip, surprised.

"Yes. Everything had not gone, though; only a few trinkets I kept in it and a watch. The thief must have been pretty sharp to have managed it without attracting my attention."

"Here in London," Philip remarked absent-mindedly, "everything is possible."

"Why! You talk like Mr. Philpott! Anyhow, this actually did happen."

"To you?" wondered Philip, and, interrupting her: "Why didn't you tell me directly we met? I might have helped you. At least I might have taken you to Scotland Yard."

"No, I did not want to trouble you," she answered a little disingenuously.

Philip looked at her with feigned reproach and she went on eagerly:

"I wished to go to Scotland Yard because I wanted a real detective. I must have a real detective, mustn't I?"

"Yes," agreed Philip with veiled irony. "There's no doubt about that."

Thoughts rushed through Philip's head: "Robbed in the open street, without her noticing it—possible; without confiding in me—unlikely. Only trinkets and watch in the bag—more and more unlikely. Scotland Yard can also arrest a thief—or myself at the rendezvous. Since she does not know my address . . . Could her story possibly be true? Am I unfair to her? No one could wish more sincerely than I that this should be the case. If I am right,

why need she tell me about Scotland Yard? That—only a woman knows. If I am doing you an injustice, Miss Holten, then I deeply apologize. And if the three thousand crowns still hold good, I do not grudge you the attempt to earn them."

Without giving the slightest indication of the trend of his thoughts Philip put a few further questions concerning the mysterious theft. Suddenly he appeared to be struck by an idea:

"If you wish to catch your thief, Miss Holten, you certainly need a real detective. I have heard a great deal about an Irishman, a Mr. Kenyon, who is reported to have achieved marvelous success. Among other achievements, in 1908 he arrested a band of forgers who had defied Scotland Yard for three weeks."

"Do you think it would be very expensive?" queried Miss Holten.

"No, certainly not. He follows his profession more as an amateur, and if the case should prove very engrossing he possibly would not charge anything at all. I am convinced that he will find yours interesting, Miss Holten."

"And he can arrest my thief if he finds him?"

"Why, of course, Miss Holten! Don't worry about that. He is a regular detective, as good as any man from Scotland Yard. I can write down his address for you if you like."

"Thanks, if you will be so kind—"

Philip tore a sheet from his pocketbook, wrote in graceful characters "Mr. J. Kenyon, 5 Bradford Mansions, W." and handed it to Miss Holten, who slipped it into her bag.

"If he should ask for a reference—one never knows—just mention Professor Pelotard, will you?"

"But I don't know any Professor Pelotard," she objected.

"No matter, I know him well, and I take the liberty of giving you permission to use his name. I also know that Kenyon thinks very highly of him."

"Thank you," said Miss Holten as she sipped her coffee, while Philip, a little pale, stared in front of him.

Was it possible that he misjudged her? Or was she capable of acting a part with such consummate skill? Oh, woman, woman! But they would see. The future would

show whether he was right or not, and today was today.

BEFORE they parted late that night in front of her boarding-house, Philip had an inspiration. While he was settling up with the 'chauffeur and she stood in the crude light of the head-lamps, he remarked casually, "By the way, I shall soon be returning to Sweden."

She started in unmistakable surprise and stammered: "You—back to Sweden? . . . Return to Sweden?"

"Keep calm," rejoined Philip laughingly. "I shan't yet forsake you—not tomorrow at any rate."

She had been suspiciously startled when he had spoken of his journey to Sweden; so she knew all about him, and his suppositions were well founded. Or—could it be that she did not wish to lose him? A shiver ran through him at the thought; he took a quick resolve.

"Will you let me know if I can be of any use to you in this business with the police? Here is my address. Forgive me; I have no visiting card." He quickly wrote a few lines on a loose leaf. "I am always at home about five in the afternoon, sometimes later, and always at your service, Miss Holten."

"Mr. P. Collin, 19 Inverness Crescent, N.W.," she read, and placed the address with that of Mr. Kenyon in her bag.

"Let us walk down the street for a moment," she broke off. "I want a breath of air."

He assented eagerly and they slowly paced under the trees whose branches overshadowed Regent's Park.

Suddenly she stopped and turned toward him.

"You have been very kind," she said. "I had imagined you quite, quite different."

"Ah! Miss Holten, you hardly knew me. In Stockholm ten years ago—that hardly counts. But in what way did you imagine me different?" demanded Philip with a beating heart. Oh, woman, woman!

"I don't know," she answered lamely; then suddenly added without pausing: "Kiss me! . . . But only just once."

His head whirling, Philip drew her tempestuously to him, shaken by the same bitter delight which he had experienced at Frascati's when she had suddenly called him

by name. But now it was a hundredfold greater, and, with burning hands, he seized her beautiful head and covered her mouth with kisses, while his glance plunged into her wonderful blue eyes. What he was kissing on her lips were all his dreams of youth, his past, all the things that could never be his again. She had thrown her arm around his neck, in the dim light he saw her tender smile. Oh, woman! Oh, woman! And before the cock crows . . .

Suddenly she tore herself away from him and said in a breathless voice, "Now, good night!" The next moment she had disappeared in the trembling shadows of the leaves. A few seconds, and Philip heard the door slam to with a sharp reverberation.

IT WAS the next day about five in the afternoon in Inverness Crescent, a small street in the northwest of London, chiefly inhabited by artists and people of Bohemian tastes. Studios and single rooms were always available, and tenants moved in every day, without blocking the street with furniture vans, or moved out just as easily, and rarely on account of having themselves given notice.

Therefore, when that day about noon a quietly dressed gentleman with a small amount of luggage had arrived at Number 19 and rented two rooms on the third floor, he attracted but scant attention. The only feature open to comment was that he was accompanied by his man-servant, for men-servants were rare birds in Inverness Crescent. The stranger took the rooms for a month, under the name of Collin, and ordered his luggage to be taken upstairs at once. The caretaker, who received the rent, retired to his own quarters, without taking any further notice of the new lodger.

It had now turned five, and the sun sent its pale slanting rays across Inverness Crescent. Conversation and laughter issued from the half-open windows of the street, while tobacco fumes swam lightly into the air. The peace of the autumn afternoon brooded over the street, when it was suddenly broken by the shrill tooting of a motor, which swung on its capacious tires into Inverness Crescent. Slowing down, it drove past the houses until it reached Number 19, where it stopped. A pale-looking lady in a blue costume and a red-haired gentleman in a faultless

lounge suit quickly jumped out and disappeared into the entrance.

"Mr. Collin?" inquired the latter.

"Third floor to the left," growled the caretaker, and with quick steps the strangers hurried up the narrow carpetless stairs.

They stopped on the landing on the third floor and the white-faced young lady leaned heavily on the banisters. Her eyes, a prey to unusual emotion, were unnaturally wide and her breath came in gasps. At last, she controlled herself and cast an apologetic glance at her companion.

"You are sure that you have all the papers which are necessary for an arrest, Mr. Kenyon?" she asked.

"Yes, quite sure, Miss Holten. Shall I ring?"

"Please," she answered dully.

If Kenyon had known Swedish he would have understood the words she whispered to herself:

"Oh, God! What have I done? Can I still draw back? No, no, it is too late, but I was right. . . ."

The sound of the bell clanging in the distance had hardly ceased when the door was flung open and a man, deadly pale, put out his head. When he saw the visitors he staggered back but before he was able to speak, there came an exclamation from Kenyon:

"Lavertisse! By Jove, isn't this Lavertisse? How in the name of all—"

But Lavertisse cut short his question by suddenly collapsing. In order to prevent himself from sinking to the ground he had to cling convulsively at the door knob with one hand, while with the other he clutched his throat as if on the point of suffocation. At last he was able to gasp out:

"The master is—the master has—the poor master—"

"What's it all about?" roared Kenyon, catching him by the shoulder. "Out with it, Lavertisse! What's happened to the man?"

"He has taken his life," sobbed Lavertisse at last while big tears ran down his cheeks. "Just now—I just came home—and found him dead—half his head off with the razor!"

Stiff with astonishment, Kenyon dropped his hand and stared at Miss Holten. She had drawn herself up and stood before him erect, silent, of a ghastly pallor, while a swarm of thoughts flooded her mind.

"Taken his life! Could he have guessed?

Impossible. What have I done? God! No, it is impossible. . . ."

At last her lips moved, and, imploring Kenyon to allow her to enter, she went past him into the flat, Kenyon following her. What lay behind all this?

That morning he had received a visit from this delightful young lady, who with white lips but a cold, steady glance, had requested his help in connection with an arrest. She had, by chance as it appeared, recognized in London a fugitive swell mobster, a compatriot who had swindled various large banks of considerable sums: he had been wanted by the police for a long time, and a reward had been offered for his capture, but with incredible boldness he had flaunted all his pursuers. Kenyon raised a few objections: this was not in his line; better invoke the aid of Scotland Yard.

But she had been persistent, absolutely obstinate. Scotland Yard was too slow, she rejoined, questioning him with naïve irony as to whether he were really a detective, with full power to arrest people. Piqued and attracted by her beauty, Kenyon gave in, though he did so reluctantly. The whole day had been spent in getting papers; and spurred on by her ardor he had quickly succeeded in obtaining them. After procuring the warrant, they had at once driven to Inverness Crescent—how she had learned the criminal's address, she did not wish to disclose. With his sharp intuition Kenyon guessed that there was more behind this than appeared on the surface. And now on reaching the spot they were confronted by the fact that their quarry had escaped them by suicide.

THE study was large, with windows on both sides of the house, but it contained only a desk, a few small tables, which held smoking utensils, a half-filled bookshelf and a few chairs. All the window blinds were drawn and the light was faint. At the end of the room, in a large armchair, sat a nearly indistinguishable figure, whose head hung down on one side, in an uncannily slack attitude. It was turned away from them and faced the window, near which he sat—just as if in his last moments, before his spirit took flight, he had wished to catch a last glimpse of the daylight he fled from. A fly buzzed in the deathly stillness and Lavertisse's sobbing broke upon it at intervals.

Suddenly, while they were still silently wrapped in the suggestive atmosphere of this scene, Kenyon started at a sound, which at first he could not quite define, but which then made him blanch to his lips. It was the splashing of a drop, which slowly fell to the carpet from the lolling head. What was this idiotic idea of Lavertisse to close all the windows and let down the blinds? In the fear that Miss Holten might lose consciousness, he hastened to the nearest window and flung up the blind. He felt most uncomfortable in the weird half-light; and the heavy dripping sound on the floor filled him with inexpressible repugnance. He beheld Miss Holten still staring at the indistinct figure in the armchair; then his glance wandered to the writing-table, where a white envelope, propped up against a photograph frame, attracted his attention. He picked it up, and a stifled exclamation roused Miss Holten from her gloomy silence.

"Miss Holten," he said in a hushed voice, "a letter for you."

She quailed, as if he had dealt her a blow. With outstretched hands, which shook so violently that she could hardly control them, she seized the envelope which he was holding out to her and dropped it helplessly.

"I cannot, I cannot," she murmured.

Kenyon glanced anxiously at her. "Shall I fetch a doctor?" he asked. "He might be able to do something for him," he wanted to add, but stopped short as he remembered the words of Lavertisse—"half the head cut off."

Miss Holten held him back with a sudden gesture and a horrified look at the armchair.

"Wait!" she said. "Later. . . . First I want—"

Without finishing the sentence, she tore open the envelope and took from it a white sheet. With an unsteady glance she at last succeeded in deciphering what was written. The ink was of a purplish red—the color of blood, as it seemed to her.

"Dear Miss Holten," she read. "As I voluntarily take leave of a sullied life my last thoughts go to you. This is a farewell and a thank you.

"For to me you have been a second *primavera*, a second spring: on the two wonderful autumn days in which I have known you, my dead youth has come to life again—

youth when the world lay full of hope before me, when I still had the right to live among my fellow-men and to win the love of a pure and good woman! Accept all my gratitude for this.

"For, Sigrid (I call you so, and it is of no consequence if on the edge of the Unknown I dare to do this without your permission), though you may not know it, I have for a long time forfeited this right, the right to look people straight in the face and to find happiness with a good woman—a woman like you, Sigrid. My life has been a chain of follies—a chain of crimes, says the Law—and I am not going to dispute it. When you found me, I had sunk so deeply that I did not dare to think of you; and when I recognized this, I grasped for the first time the depth of my ignominy. It was then I made my unshakable resolve. Whenever I looked into your eyes, whenever I listened to your joyous, girlish laughter, I blenched and thought, 'If she only knew!' And yesterday, when I kissed you, Sigrid, my resolution stood firm. My whole being hungered for you. But it was not to be; I did not want to sully your purity with my shame. At the thought that you, without whom I did not want to live, should learn to love me and some day hear what I am—a swindler, a fugitive, pursued by a letter of warrant; that a price, a ridiculous price of three thousand crowns has been set on my head—at this thought, Sigrid, the whole of my inner consciousness rose in revolt and I said to myself: 'No, this must never be! You have lived long enough!'

"Once more before my hand makes the fatal gash I take leave of your radiant, innocent womanhood. Farewell! May the gods protect you, and may you forget that you have seen and spoken to one so utterly unworthy of you, but who loved you all the same,

PHILIP COLLIN."

SHE read the letter to the end with dimmed sight—this letter in which each word stung like a lash—and was about to slip it back into the envelope, when she suddenly noticed that it still contained a smaller one. With a trembling hand she drew it forth and saw to her surprise that it was addressed to Mr. Kenyon. When she turned round to call him he was tiptoeing toward the armchair with its ghastly burden. Incapable of uttering a word, she

watched him draw up a blind and was startled to hear him suddenly utter a resounding Irish oath.

"Mr. Kenyon!" she exclaimed in a voice which shook with tears. "How can you—how can you in the presence of the dead?"

"Dead, be blowed!" shouted Kenyon. "What is the meaning of this tomfoolery? Is this your private little joke, or has Mr. Collin helped you to inveigle me into this expedition?"

"I do not understand you," said Miss Holten with icy contempt, "neither what you mean, nor how you dare speak to me in this tone, above all in front of the dead."

"The dead!" shouted Kenyon, exasperated. "Here is your corpse, Miss Holten." And he hurled the crumpled body out of the armchair. It described a parabola and fell with a dull thud at Miss Holten's feet. A shower of red drops spurted from the head. Nearly hysterical, she stared at the lifeless body, the helplessly sagging members and the shapeless head, until at last with a burst of shrill laughter she staggered against the writing-table. It was a lay figure, an ordinary lay figure, whose head was soaked in red oil color, which dripped thickly to the floor.

"A dummy! A dummy! No suicide! . . . So!" She sprang up, crimson with indignation, relieved in spite of herself. So he had only been laughing at her guileless womanhood! He had seen through her, even while she flattered herself that she was leading him by the nose. He had staged the melodrama, calculated the effects, filled her with remorse, with pangs of conscience, caused her to shed tears, all this to bring her pride low in the end through this ridiculous scene.

"Oh! I hate him! I loathe him!" she exclaimed, and with shrill laughter threw the note which was enclosed in her letter to Kenyon.

"A letter for you, Mr. Kenyon. Do read it!" she exclaimed.

KENYON, who had been an indignant witness of her emotional outburst, took the letter and tore open the envelope without glancing at it. But after a cursory look, he hurled himself at Miss Holten and shouted more than he spoke:

"Ha! Now I remember something! Now I realize why the name of this Mr. Collin

seemed so familiar. All day long I have had the feeling that I must have heard it somewhere. You had a recommendation from some one, for which I forgot to ask. What was his name? Answer me!"

"A recommendation—yes, from Professor Pelotard; that is, I—"

"Professor Pelotard! Ah! A nice kettle of fish! Will you kindly read this, Miss Holten, if you please?"

She took the white card and read:

"Dear Mr. Kenyon:

"I have taken the liberty of sending you a young friend, Miss Sigrid Holten, of Sweden, who wishes to arrest me with your assistance. I beg you will be kind enough to fulfil her wish, and I assure you that I do not in the least intend to appear ironical if I predict that—like the Carabineers of immortal fame—you will always come too late. It has long been my intention to 'forestall the ends of Justice' as the newspapers have it. (To do so has always been one of the rare principles of my life.) This evening I am putting an end to my unworthy existence, of which you, my dear Kenyon, have been one of the few bright memories. I wish you a prosperous future, and beg that you will sometimes dedicate a thought to

"Your unhappy friend,

"PROFESSOR PELOTARD.

"Alias Philip Collin."

Then came an interval of several lines which was followed by a neatly worded postscript:

"I desire that my ashes may repose on the Mälar shore among the Swedish people, whom I so passionately loved."

Miss Holten looked up hastily, for Kenyon had made a tigerlike spring to the door.

"Lavertisse!" he bawled. "Blast me if I don't catch him this time!"

With considerable noise he clattered down the stairs in his pursuit of Lavertisse. But it was too late. The faithful servant had long ago followed the example of his master, and had fled from Mr. Kenyon toward unknown women and adventures.

Beaten on all points, flaming red with vexation, Mr. Kenyon returned to an amazingly chastened Miss Holten.

"And now, Miss Holten," he announced roughly, "be so kind as to get into the car. I have still a bone to pick with you about this Collin affair."

The Battle of Couets

*The Motor Transport Has Its Day in Bill's
Story of His Private Battle Behind the Lines*

By Oscar Lewis

"AND so," said the boss, "you sail on Tuesday, on the *Bolimpic*. You should reach Paris before the twentieth. You are to go at once to this address and ask for Monsieur Weil. When he appears, you are to—"

It came without warning, all this did. "Yes—yes," I said, to show him I was entering into the spirit of the thing.

"When Monsieur Weil appears you are to deliver these papers. He will question you—"

Didn't it sound like one of those spy plays that cluttered up the theaters way back in the fall of '17? Later too, perhaps, for all I know; I left for points east at about that time. I didn't know the boss had theatrical ambitions. Motor trucks is his line; the Universal-Standard, it's Geared to any Grade. But here he'd called me in and started talking melodrama.

"Monsieur Weil, I say, will question you—"

"Hold on a minute," I broke out, "until I get the cue. You're Ludwig von Hohenzoff, the International Spy, that's clear. And I'm Simple Steve, your unsuspecting tool. We're all complete now, major, except Novesta, the vamp. We—"

"Cut out that 'major' talk," said the boss, irritated. "The war's been over a million years. And you might forget the comedy too, Bill, and listen."

I forgot the comedy and listened. Anyhow, that word "major" had just slipped out unintentional. We'd both been through the dreadful war together—Motor Transport. We had left the Standard on the same day, back in '17, but the boss had beat me home by five months, majors having had

slightly more pull than corporals in our recent army. But on the day I was mustered out, he had come down to Dix and dragged me back to the Standard and put me to work demonstrating the big six-ton models. The boss is like that; A-1 all the way down.

And now after a year and a half of faithful work he'd called me in and started kidding about sending me back to France. Only, I found out after a bit, he wasn't kidding at all.

The Standard, I learned, was about to enter the European market. They had opened a branch in Paris, with salesrooms and all, and had sent over a complete demonstrating line, from the half-ton delivery wagons to the big brutes of Jumbo Standards. This Monsieur Weil person was to be our agent and I was going over to attend to the assembling of the trucks when they arrived, and to break in some of the home talent as demonstrators.

The boss gave me the news and turned me loose for a week so I could get my shirts laundered and make other necessary preparations.

For a couple of days the thought that I was going back to France sort of put me in a daze; I couldn't get used to the idea. When I'd waved good-by to the smoky headlands off St. Nazaire fifty years or so before from the tail-end of the transport, I'd had an idea I was saying a permanent farewell to la belle France, which is one of the things we used to call it. I did reflect that maybe I'd return, say in twenty years or so, just for the sensation of driving up some of those Vosges grades in a car that could make more than four miles an hour

on second. They got your goat sometimes, those army trucks; we used to yearn something scandalous for a car that would hit fifty, instead of those lumbering moving-vans that shook your teeth out at fifteen.

I used to have thoughts, too, of bringing Edith back some day and showing her the Gare de l'Est and other sights of Paris. Edith had knitted me a pair of wristlets and a helmet that had horns on it, and in other ways had tried to make me look as warlike as possible, and when the armistice came along our letters had reached the *My Own Dearest* stage. After that they cooled off a lot, and when I got back finally I found her under the influence of an ex-doughboy who had taught her to refer in scornful tones to the S. O. S., which had lolled about in Paris while the boys were up on the line conducting the war. This to me, who had juggled drums of gasoline for five weeks continuous in the fall of '18, and so close to the lines that—well, we won't discuss that. This to me, whose sole sight of Paris had been confined to one of those devilish Y. M. C. A. walking tours, taken between trains.

Edith and I didn't hit it off well when I got back. The doughboy had given her an account of his division history, clipped from an old copy of the *Stars and Stripes*. It was her favorite reading matter. She used to sit on the sofa and quote to me the number of guns and prisoners they had captured, and how many yards they'd advanced against the Prussian Guards. That outfit positively never fought anything but the Prussian Guards.

Edith was embroidering his divisional insignia on a sofa pillow; a big, gaudy thing a foot high. We motor transport boys had something neat in the way of insignia; not at all flashy, you understand, but big enough to be seen, and arresting when done in four colors. I offered to trace it out for Edith on a tablecloth, so she could fill in the colors. But she didn't seem to take much interest in it, and I decided finally that she was unworthy, and that if she ever wanted to see Paris it would have to be with the doughboy.

So when I sailed for France again the following week, with a passport that had my picture on it and with other articles in the way of baggage, I was one of those cynical guys so far as women were con-

cerned. Shallow and changeable, the most of them were; they didn't know their own minds for more than a week at a time.

ON THE boat were a lot of prosperous parties going over to see the spots where the shoes Uncle Bill had made for the boys had busted out at the seams. I used to have to listen to them exchanging chatter in the smoking-room.

"Yeab, I've got m' car here on board; going to do her up right, and damn the expense."

"You bet! Château-Thierry the first day, then beat it for the Argonne. That's the way I figure it now. Sure—shavin' soap's m' line; nine million bars for the boys. Twenty contracts—"

On the second day out I scraped up acquaintance with the fifth assistant engineer and I used to stand his watches with him, which is the only thing that prevented me and the shaving-soap patriot from exchanging heated words. That held me back until we docked and after that we spent only the afternoon and evening together on the Paris train before we parted for good, and with no feelings of regret.

That old Monsieur Weil party proved to be the goods; we hit it off like brothers from the start. He spoke a ragged brand of English and his salesroom was furnished with red plush chairs and settees, but there was nothing you could teach him about a gasoline engine. After a week our trucks began to arrive and I got out the overalls and went to work. For the next six weeks I was busy, though I found time to drop Edith a half-dozen post-cards of bridges and things, just by way of showing her what she'd missed by falling for that My Division stuff. She wrote back that she hoped I'd have time to go out and see the old battlefields where the boys had fought.

About a month later old Monsieur Weil astonished everybody by selling a Jumbo Standard to a company that was reconstructing its wineries—imagine reconstructing a winery!—and I set out to make the delivery, and that's how on the afternoon of the second day out from Paris, I came to Couets.

Couets, Mr. Shaving-Soap Manufacturer, is number seventeen of the thirty villages you passed through without seeing on your third day out. It's the village, members of

the A. E. F., where old Gus used to serve *rhum chaud* in half-gallon potions in the back room of his place on the street behind the church. It is also the village at the foot of the twelve-kilometer grade, and as such it may be remembered by some of us who carried supplies that way in the spring of '18 in the trucks we'd inherited from the French and British.

There was something about that grade that caused those trucks to remember their age and exhibit their infirm spots. The driver who hoped to finish with his convoy listened carefully as he passed through Couets and if his chariot showed any unusual signs of weakness he'd swing out of line at the foot of the grade and locate the trouble.

Now, if he dropped out at that point, it's an even bet that he stopped directly in front of the last house on the left-hand side of the road, as you go out. It's one of those small houses, lacking two rooms and a tower of being a *château*—which latter, I've figured out, is any house of more than seven rooms, especially if it has a tower in one corner and a pond somewhere near. It is one of those modern houses, built in 1405 or 1867 or some such year, and there's a stone wall in front and a high gate that's closed so tight it looks as if it's locked, though it never is, so far as I know, and never has been.

Certainly the gate wasn't locked on the afternoon, early in 1918, when I first shoved it open and stepped inside the yard. I had a bucket in one hand and I was after water to fill a radiator that was leaking in more places than a garden sprinkler. The rest of the convoy was disappearing over the hill and I was in a hurry.

Thirty seconds after I'd stepped inside that gate I'd lost all interest in convoys and leaky radiators. Let me try to tell you what I saw. I came slamming through the gate in a big hurry and I'd taken one step toward the front door, intending to knock and put my vocabulary under the strain of asking for a bucket of water. Then I heard a sort of surprised sound off to the right. I looked about and there sitting around on little benches beneath a tree were a dozen little French kids; surprised little beggars with their black smocks and wide eyes, their heads craned about as they stared at me.

Sitting over near the trunk of the tree was a girl. She said something to the youngsters and they stopped staring and turned around and behaved themselves. Did they love their teacher? I'll leave it to you. The girl put down her book and stood up. She was dainty and young and graceful. That's what I thought the first moment I saw her; I didn't have to think for the words, they just appeared. She looked at me with one interested glance that took in the grease and the oil, the dust and the grime. I had jerked off my hat and was backing out, making foolish sounds of apology, when she stepped down between the benches and was at my side. Dainty, I've said she was.

"In what way it is, monsieur," she asked, in her careful, school-book English, "that I can accommodate you?"

She had put a hand on my arm, to keep me from bolting, I guess. It was one of those unnecessary precautions. She was taller than I had thought at my first sight of her; her eyes were almost level with my own as we stood there, getting acquainted by just looking at one another.

I MUST have stared like a hotel clerk who's taking a face-memory course in a correspondence school, because after a moment her cheeks began to get pink and she looked off into the distance. That brought me back to earth and I remembered the bucket in my hand. I told her what I wanted and she led the way around the side of the house to the well. We had no more than disappeared when those angel-like youngsters broke ranks and swarmed through the gate into the street, shrieking to one another to come out and have a look at the grand camion, by which they meant my wheezy old wreck of a truck. It was clear from the noise they were making that any further school that afternoon was a total loss. I looked at the girl to see how she was taking this, and in a second we were both laughing. That somehow completed the getting-acquainted process; and when I carried my water out the gate a little later, it seemed as if we'd known each other a thousand years.

At that time we were passing through Couets about every third day. During the next few weeks I learned a lot about mademoiselle the teacher. She had been an

orphan for ten years, and since 1913 she had lived in the house on the outskirts of Couets with her brother, who was a sort of deputy chief of police in that Department. That's as near as I've been able to figure it out. Anyhow, he was killed in some forgotten battle early in 1915. Mademoiselle had relatives in some safe corner in the south of France. Did she close up the little house in the village and beat it down there? Any one in Couets will tell you the answer. The schoolmaster was called out the following spring, and without making any fuss about it, the girl took his place, collecting the youngsters at her house each day.

I've listened to the old woman in the bakery describe it when I'd go in on a cold evening to persuade her to sell me some of her newly baked rolls, without a bread ticket.

Such a teacher as she was, to be sure! the old lady used to say, stroking her mustache sentimentally. It was unheard of—understand, never known before—the things she did. The youngsters positively didn't want to come home again at the end of the day; it would, monsieur, have been a weary time for them these last three years if it had not been for the little teacher!

If I had heard these tales first, before I'd seen the girl herself, I'd have pictured her as one of those "I will do good!" women. But she was miles from that; she knew how to laugh. She was like a kid herself: a serious kid who has seen things, but who hasn't lost interest in which team is leading the league, if you get the idea. She didn't let any one convince her that she was a wonder, and she never even started wearing her hair like Joan of Arc's. You couldn't fool her about anything; if you started she'd look straight at you and laugh. I don't mean that she couldn't be serious; only that when you thought she was most serious she was laughing underneath. Maybe that's why I didn't take her seriously—that, and other reasons.

There was Edith for one thing. I had got the wristlets, made with her own hands, only the month before, along with a letter in which she said that she hoped they'd fit, and that she wasn't going out hardly at all now on account of the war, and would I like a pneumatic pillow? She signed it, "Your Lonesome friend who Thinks of you." She had never heard of "My Division" then.

Everybody's Magazine, July, 1924

Another reason I didn't let my thought bear down heavy when thinking of the little teacher was because I thought I had things figured out very well so far as she was concerned. Here she was, you see, young and naturally cheerful, cooped up in this village that didn't offer a great deal in the way of light entertainment. She had felt the need of some one to play around with, and I had busted through the gate that afternoon and supplied it. With my high-school French and her seminary English we had not much trouble exchanging ideas, and within a month my truck was breaking down regularly each time I passed through Couets.

Early in the summer our outfit was shifted up north and I had time to see her only once, for about fifteen minutes, before I left that part of the country for good. I tramped in that afternoon and told her the news, and wished her all sorts of good luck. She said how sorry she was, and how she hoped I'd be safe, and we both smiled cheerfully and I started backing out again. Then suddenly I'd stopped and we were standing there looking at one another, and the tears had started coming up into her eyes. She was positively crying, just like any kid. In a moment we were posing for that scene at the end of the sixth reel, just after Inspector Kelly has dragged the scoundrel Duval off to Headquarters—do you follow me? If we had been posing in front of a camera they'd have accused us of being film hogs. Anyhow, after five hundred feet or so, we began to take notice and promises were exchanged and three complete farewells said. She was smiling again, and she stood at the gate and waved goodbye as cheerful as you could hope for.

THE first month after that I wrote her some letters, but I never got any reply, which may have been because we were moving fast enough to keep seven jumps ahead of our mail. And it may have been because she had thought it all over in a calm moment and decided to laugh and be normal again. This last seemed on the whole to be the most likely reason, and I decided to let it go at that.

So I wrote a letter to Edith telling her I'd got the horned helmet, and that France might be a pretty good place for those that was used to it and understood its ways,

but that America would look pretty good to me, not to mention some American girls I could name without having to think too hard. Then for three or four months we learned what it meant to be busy, and I didn't write any letters at all. And after that the armistice came, and a couple of months later we turned in our trucks and moved toward the coast. Here we sat for three months longer, playing a game that had once been draw-poker, but which had been changed to a form of raving insanity through making everything below a five-spot wild. It was a pale and feeble group of wrecks they herded finally on board the transport and headed west. Every half-hour some one would start up in the night and shriek: "You win, I've only got five kings!"

A couple of weeks later I was back at the Standard demonstrating the big Jumbos, and listening on my off time while Edith told how the Umpty-Umpth had mopped up the machine-guns out west of Bordeaux.

Which brings me back to the chance which had sent me across to France again two years later. And it brings me back again to Couets, which village I drove into on my second day out from Paris with the truck I was taking down to deliver to the wine merchants.

I won't say that I'd stopped thinking of the petite teacher during the time that had passed. Every now and then—once or twice a month, maybe—something she'd said or done would occur to me. She had become one of the good friends all of us used to know. As for the chance of seeing her again, it hadn't occurred to me. Even after I had got back to France I'd never thought of it—it just hadn't struck me. Besides, I was a hard-boiled cynic now. Edith and her eternal doughboy had soured me on the woman question. Flighty; they didn't know their own minds.

As I went bumping over the bridge and up into Couets, I thought out a scheme that might give the little teacher a bad quarter of an hour, that is, until she saw the joke. So I brought the truck up before the door of the little house with the wall in front, and climbed down and walked through the gate, just as I had done fifty times before. But there was a curious feeling about it, just the same.

I couldn't see that the yard had changed

very much. The benches were off to the right, grouped beneath the tree. But though it was mid-afternoon there were no children in sight and school was not in session. The schoolmaster, I learned later, had been back on the job for more than a year. And there, in the center of that group of empty benches, sat mademoiselle the teacher, without any pupils.

She had heard the truck rumble up and stop and she was looking at the gate, her hands lying in her lap. Somehow my little scheme didn't seem so bright as I thought it was going to be. But it was too late now to change the plan, so I went ahead.

"Well, I've come back," I called, giving her no time to frame an alibi. "I'm back to hold you to your promise!"

I tramped across to her side, holding out my arms as though that were the most natural thing in the world to do.

A bad quarter-hour she'd have explaining things! This crazy American who would take such a thing seriously. A foolish promise, given without preliminaries—and that a full three years ago! I'd have to be careful not to let myself grin.

The girl stood up. I knew she wasn't so calm as she appeared to be, but she wasn't going to show it, you may be sure.

"And why," she asked, looking at me sort of casual and puzzled, "why is it that I should forget my promise?"

Then, as if we had parted sometime yesterday afternoon, she took the one necessary step forward and came right into my arms.

I didn't try to puzzle things out until a long time after, and then I found that I'd lost all interest in trying to get them straight. We were sitting on her bench beneath the tree and for some foolish reason I asked her if she had known all along that I was coming back.

"I hoped that you would," she said, after thinking about it for a time. "No, I was not sure. But one must take the life as it comes. And when what comes is not good, then one can use the philosophy."

Wasn't that like her? "One can use the philosophy!"

"And when what comes is good," I asked, imitating her serious tone, "what happens then?"

"Ah," she said, beginning to smile, "then it is to be happy!"

A Novel Complete in This Issue

The Hired Heart

Out of Luck, Employed to Do a Most Extraordinary Thing, a Young Man Falls into a Most Extraordinary Romance. A Story That Moves Swiftly

By George F. Worts

Illustrations by Lawrence Herndon

MOST young men, newly landed in a city they have not seen for seven years, standing in stern need of remunerative occupation, would first conserve such assets as they possess; they would next seek diligently for employment. Terence Markie was different in important respects from most young men.

For seven years, and for a reason which may, in time, be disclosed, he had been wandering over the earth. He had seen far lands, strange peoples. Abruptly, upon an impulse, he had decided to come home—that is, to America. The decision had been reached in England—and in destitution; the steerage did not appeal to him. Not from motives of economy, therefore, but from deliberate choice, he had stowed away on the *Iron State*, with results not altogether happy, that vessel's officers having proved singularly unamenable to reason.

He found himself, however, ultimately in New York. He had chosen to replenish his wardrobe; since it was summer, and he liked the country, he had chosen to buy white flannels, a blue Norfolk jacket; to go with them, soft-collared shirts, an assortment of bow ties. Excellent clothes—but hardly suited to job-hunting in New York. Here, certainly, was no conservation of assets.

Nor was it the act of a cautious man to

register at a hotel where all the rooms had baths, and breakfast cost enough to buy three perfectly good meals in slightly more modest surroundings. Yet he did this; achieved, so, the perfect setting for the moment in which, as, dutifully but regretfully, he scanned the "Help Wanted" columns of his morning paper, he came on the advertisement he sought. It read thus:

YOUNG MAN accustomed to society for position as companion; tact, presence and resourcefulness required. Credentials essential. Apply in person, before noon on Saturday. Enid Cray, Crabapple Tree Pike, Darkport, Conn.

It was Saturday. The wisdom of selecting a good hotel was at once apparent. Information concerning trains to Darkport was at once forthcoming. Abandoning his second cup of coffee, Terence caught, by the flicker of an eyelash, the only train that would carry him to Darkport before noon. If it should cost not more than fifty cents to reach Crabapple Tree Pike from Darkport station, he could manage a station hack. Otherwise—he could walk. He was deeply content.

He did, in due time, reach Crabapple Tree Pike and the home of Enid Cray: an old house; white pillars peeping through a grove of sugar maples; a gravel driveway; a fallow meadow; a silly ornate iron fence, brown with rust; lilacs in bloom; a curious, half run-down look. And a girl, in a

starched blue dress, kneeling on the grass, drying her hair. Long hair, that showered all about her, beautiful, dark chestnut hair—so long that as she sprang up, upon hearing Terry, it fell below her knees. Enid Cray, he guessed.

She regarded him with some hostility. Plainly, she looked upon the drying of her hair as a function personal, intimate, particular. She saw a young man very tall and slender, thirty, perhaps, with a handsome face, classical in outline; a dark young man; an extremely, indeed, an almost disturbingly, good-looking young man.

"I'm answering your advertisement—you are Miss Cray?" he said.

She considered him, surprised, disturbed—amused.

"You are not the man I had in mind at all," she said ultimately, with a firm air.

BUT Terence Markie simultaneously reached the conclusion that he wanted this job, no matter how many and how onerous his tasks might be, more than he had ever wanted anything in his life. It was peculiarly difficult to account for this. Miss Cray's attitude was almost humiliating. It was, perhaps, a question of stubbornness, the growing possibility of a clash between the irresistible masculine force and the immovable feminine body.

"What type of man did you have in mind?" he asked.

"The man I had in mind," she replied, with the effect of selecting words with delicate precision, "must be—must be desperate!" Her hesitancy betrayed rising nervousness. She rushed on: "In addition to the other qualifications I mentioned he must be *very* desperate. I honestly don't believe it's a job you'd care for."

"Have there been other applicants?" he asked.

Miss Cray shook her head. "I hardly expected any one to—to take it seriously."

"Then it's a sort of joke-job?"

"Oh, not at all! It is really a most peculiar sort of job. But—but it's a job for a ruined man. Does that sound queer? It's not the kind of a job a—*a* nice man would want, I think. At the same time *I* must be very particular. The man I want must be desperate, but at the same time his reputation should still be—" She paused.

"Immaculate?"

"I meant to say intact."

"Shall I say that mine is—still intact?"

"You don't look very desperate to me!"

"I don't suppose you'd care to tell me what the nature of this job is?"

"Decidedly not!"

She looked very thoughtful. She wanted a desperate young man, did she? Very well! She should have one!

"Miss Cray," he said, "if you had not a cent in the world—if you had no friend within 3,000 miles—would you be desperate?"

"I—yes—I think so—perhaps—" she admitted.

"Well, I don't think; I *know*!" he said. And, briefly, he gave an account of his recent disbursements.

"And it cost just half a dollar to get here," he said. "So, you see—"

"They usually charge a dollar," she said. "I—don't know— What did you say your name was?"

He hesitated—then told her. After all—why not? The name seemed to strike, vaguely, some chord in her memory. She repeated it thoughtfully, but soon gave up any attempt to place it; frowned, and finally suggested lunch—and, by implication and indirection, further negotiations.

Terence Markie followed her through a long, cool, darkened room, where he caught glimpses of old mahogany—heirlooms, he guessed. At the back, an arched doorway framed a section of a brighter room done in French gray. Sunlight fell through a leaded window to form a lustrous pool upon a drop-leaf mahogany table, its polish that of rubbed old copper against the glistening silver at two places.

The atmosphere of the living-room was one to arouse a thousand questions, none of which Terence Markie took occasion to voice.

He was, he quickly perceived, undergoing a gracious but penetrating examination. Until the alert and receptive mind of Miss Cray had formed a definite conclusion, he was expected to show her his paces. He firmly straightened out a smile as, with the proper shade of absent-minded deference and courteous ease, he drew out her chair, then seated himself.

A tall, thin, angular woman with the hooked nose, thin-lipped, unsmiling mouth and the sharp, bright cold eyes of New England entered with a burdened tray.

She served jerkily, like an automatic machine. For a time small talk served them both.

"Shall we go outdoors and—talk?" Miss Cray asked finally. "Perhaps you'd enjoy smoking under an apple tree over a hundred years old."

"The more I see of this job, the better I like it," he replied.

Laughing, he decided, was one of the nicest and easiest things she did.

"YOU remind me of the stories of the bright little boys that always end, 'He got the job,'" Miss Cray said. "Little Johnny applies for a job as office boy. The boss suddenly asks him how many pennies there are in a dollar. 'A hundred and four and a half, sir, at the end of the year in any good savings bank,' says Johnny. He got the job!"

"The field hasn't narrowed itself down to me—yet?" Terence Markie murmured.

"It may, though, when you've told me a great deal more about yourself than you've done so far, Mr. Markie! Will you tell me this, please? Have you very sensitive feelings?"

"They are tougher than Manila hemp," he answered.

"That," she said, softly, "I think, is the first lie you've told me!"

Established in the shade of a gnarled apple tree in an orchard made up of apple trees endless and incalculable, with Miss Cray at the other end of a rustic bench watching him carefully as he lighted a cigarette, Terence Markie was well content.

"Do you mind telling me your age?" she asked.

"Not at all. I was twenty-eight last January."

"You are an American citizen, of course."

"Oh, yes!"

"Parents living?"

He shook his head.

"Have you ever been on the stage, Mr. Markie?"

"Heavens, no!"

"In the movies?"

He seemed astonished. "Lord, no!"

She pondered awhile, with her round chin cupped in her hand, her eyes seeming to brood upon him.

"How long have you been out of the country?"

"Between seven and eight years."

"All of the time?"

"Yes; all of the time."

"Where?"

"Well," he said, "almost everywhere. South America, Africa, India, Siam, the South Seas, China, Japan, and all of Europe but Russia."

"What part of the country are you from, Mr. Markie?"

"New England."

"Are you married?"

"Not I!"

"Engaged?"

He shook his head.

"Are you in love with any one?"

"No one."

She looked at him wonderingly, with narrowed eyes.

"Have you ever been in love?"

"It seems to me I have," he said uneasily, "but the details are very vague."

"Do you mean to tell me," she gasped, "that you have never had a—a serious affair?"

"Not too serious," he answered.

She seemed disappointed.

"Have you ever flirted?"

"Well, maybe once or twice."

"Please be serious, Mr. Markie! I assure you—"

"Of course I have flirted!" he exclaimed.

"Who hasn't? Haven't you?"

"That has nothing to do with it, Mr. Markie. It is very important for me to know whether you *can* flirt or not."

"Is that one of the requirements of this job?"

"Yes, Mr. Markie!"

"Well, then, I can, if necessary, flirt with the utmost abandon, Miss Cray!"

"You get the job," she said, very soberly.

"Now that that's all over with," she went on, "we'll have to tackle the *real* problem. Of course, I still don't know who you are. And I suppose you haven't a single credential."

The faintest of grins flickered at his lips.

"I've got the job," he reminded her.

"That's true. You have the job, in spite of the fact that I haven't the *faintest* idea who or what you really are! Well, what I am trying to do by very graceful stages, is to lead up to the other side of the question. The job wants you, but do you want the job? So far I've done all the asking and

you've done all the answering, and it has been very nice of you to answer such queer questions. Now—well, now that we've come right up to the point, I—I'm afraid to tell you what the job is!"

"You might try," he suggested.

"**N**OT yet, please. The first thing to do is to give the pill its sugar coating. Of course, being a woman hater as you self-confessedly are, *you* won't consider it a sugar coating. Not that I care!" she added hastily, and looked away in some confusion.

Miss Cray was nearer to losing her self-possession than at any time since he had interrupted the drying of her hair. Her cheeks were rosy; her fingers were distractedly twining and untwining in her lap. Only to see her so at a loss was helpful in restoring some of his own self-confidence.

Finally she looked at him with determined lips and hard, burning eyes.

"The first thing on the program," she said rapidly, "is that you and I—I mean—Oh, gee! I mean—we're engaged!"

Terence met her glare with a look of dazed wonder. It was as if a long, long fuse had finally burned its way to its bomb.

"Engaged!" he muttered. Then, observing a strange, rather wild look in her eyes, he grinned. "Why," he began cheerfully, "that's—"

"Be careful!" she snapped. "Your first job, the preliminary to what will be the main event, so to speak, is to be my—my fiancé."

"It is the most painless engagement I have ever entered upon," he confessed enthusiastically. "Absolutely no opiates; no local anesthetics, even. Simply a long, pleasant dream, then—all over! The ideal method!"

She nodded slowly. "That's a little better. I am glad you take it so sensibly. Some men might have found occasion to be flippant. I think you will do nicely."

He nodded his gratitude. "You were speaking of a main event to which this is a preliminary. Am I to understand, however bold and rude it may seem—"

"You are to understand distinctly that you will be paid very handsomely for what I am asking you to do. This is, I should have said sooner, a matter involving money—a great deal of money. And I can afford to be very generous."

"You can?" he said indignantly. "Let me tell you, before we go a step farther, that I will not accept one cent of your money!"

"If you are going to take that silly attitude," she replied with warmth at least equal to his, "I won't tell you one more word!"

"Very well!" he snapped. "I'll go!"

"All right! Go!"

Miss Cray stared defiantly at a robin teetering back and forth on a twig in a near-by apple tree, and Terence Markie glared at a caterpillar that was crawling up the trunk of the same tree. His indignation increased. Accept her money, indeed! He! Not much!

He would have been surprised had he chanced to be observing Miss Cray's eyes at that moment. The defiance had gone its way, and in its place there shone a soft light, as of gladness or relief.

She looked at him. His indignation at that moment resolved itself into action. He rose and started determinedly toward the road.

A voice of milk and honey checked him.

"Please don't be angry. I'm sorry. I—I didn't understand. Please don't go."

He returned to her with grimly compressed lips. She looked up at him with meek, repentant round eyes.

"I knew you were sensitive!" she exclaimed. "I'll never make that mistake again. Now that I—I'm so happy that everything's settled and moving so nicely, you wouldn't leave me in the lurch, would you? You—you wouldn't just deliberately disappoint me, and ruin everything, would you?"

"I don't want to spoil your party, no. Of course, you didn't mean to say that."

"Heavens, no! It slipped out. I should have *known* how distasteful it would be—a man like you taking money from *me*. Can't we just shelve that question for a while? There's really so little time to spare. We have simply got to perfect our parts. We must have them down pat by five this afternoon—and it must be nearly three already. You're not angry any more, are you?"

"A person—a certain woman—is coming to Darkport on the 5:09 from New York," Miss Cray went on eagerly. "We will meet her train. And she must be absolutely

convinced that you and I are engaged. Do you think you can work into your part in such a short time?"

"I think so," he said, queerly.

"I'll call you Terry," she said. "Terry dear, or Terry darling, would of course be laying it on much thicker—and the thicker the better." She sighed. "I suppose it will have to be Terry dear, or dearest, or darling."

"I think that will sound very nice indeed," he agreed politely.

"Terry?" she said softly.

"Yes—Enid?"

"Can you make love poetically?"

"I don't believe I've ever tried."

"Try it now, Terry."

He looked uncomfortable, then brightened.

"Your eyes," he complied, "are like the sunshine on the hills of Ireland. Your smile is sweeter than the dusk of Stamboul!"

Enid Cray sat up with clasped hands.

"Why, that's not bad! Is it original?"

"Oh, quite!"

"Could you do it steadily?"

"Well, the subject has a great deal to do with it. Like all real artists, I must have a more or less sympathetic subject. With you, for example, it is very easy. You naturally supply plenty of the right kind of adjectives. But if, on the other hand, you were fair, fat and forty—"

Enid interrupted absently, "Of course, of course." A change had come over her. Her hands, he saw, were gripped at her sides, and her jaw muscles had hardened as if with resolution.

"If you can ladle out that kind of taffy—Oh!" she gasped, her eyes upon him.

He looked bewildered.

Enid seemed to relax, to soften. Her eyes shone kindly upon him.

"Terry," she said briskly, "the next act in our program is a ride in my flivver. Some things I find it too hard to explain, and they will have to explain themselves. We are going to visit an aunt of mine, whom I want you for special reasons to see; and it will give me a chance to see how you perform as a devoted fiancé. And—oh, you'll stay here, of course, and you'll need more clothes, won't you? If you'll go upstairs to the northeast bedroom, you will find several suits. There's one of my brother Ted's golf suits that he didn't like because

it wasn't loud enough, and I don't believe he wore it even once. It's one of these big, roomy things, and ought to fit you nobly. His shoes will probably fit you, too."

As they started toward the back of the house, Enid said:

"We'll stop at the back door a moment. I want Martha to meet you now—officially."

MARTHA, angular, lean, hawk-eyed, stepped from the kitchen at Enid's call.

"Martha, this is my fiancé. Mr. Markie, Martha. How do you like him?"

Martha crossed bony yellow arms over her sunken breast and stared at Terry coldly, appraisingly, exactly as Martha, under somewhat similar circumstances, would have stared at a salable hog.

"I suppose he'll have to do," she said.

"We're going down to see Aunt Elinore now," Enid said hastily. "Terry simply must see Aunt Elinore before we go any farther. Don't you think so, Martha?"

Martha approved grimly. "Yes, he ought to see Elinore Olmstead. It would melt anybody's heart. How much is this young fellow goin' to charge?"

"We—we haven't talked that over yet," Enid stammered.

"Well, you better talk it over right soon. I don't trust foreigners any further than I can throw that barn!"

"But he isn't a foreigner, Martha! He's a New Englander, too."

"I never saw any New Englander with a skin like an Eytalian!"

It was as if Terry did not talk the language even. After the one glance, she seemed to believe that he was, perhaps, something inanimate, without ears or articulate speech.

"Why, Martha!" the girl cried. "He's been living in Egypt—the Sahara!"

"Well," Martha said grudgingly, "I hope he does."

With which she reëntered the kitchen; and not once during the interview, Terry would have sworn, had her facial expression changed.

"Does what?" Terry said bewilderedly.

"What I want you to do," Enid answered with an air of uneasiness.

"Oh!" he said thoughtfully.

They entered the cool, blue shadow of the huge barn.

"You're awfully good to your little fiancée, Terry! Now, will you kindly show that crank how big and masterful you are? They forgot to put a self-starter on this one."

Mrs. Olmstead, Terry Markie learned on the six-mile drive over from the Cray farm, was a proud woman with a large family of undernourished children. And while she was noted for her unbending pride, her husband, Mr. Olmstead, was celebrated in his capacity of a chronic unfortunate, one of those waifs of misfortune who are always mashing a finger, or breaking a bone, or going to bed to indulge some malady.

Terry, dismayed, distressed beyond words, had to see the tragic picture of a home held together by a woman's indomitable will against all the assaults of adversity. He emerged wretched, puzzled, half angry. Why had Enid insisted on this display to him who was, after all, a stranger?

Terry had taken the wheel, and Enid sat staring mistily down the dusty, sunny road. The dream went out of her eyes as she looked around at him, frowning ever so faintly.

"Was it terrible, Terry?"

His glance was one of surprise and reproach.

"Weren't you sorry for her?"

"**SORRY?**" he cried. "In one more minute your charming fiancé— isn't that what she called me?—well, anyhow, your very devoted and adoring fiancé in another minute would have filled her every washtub with his briny tears!"

"I really wanted to find out if you had the capacity, which so many people lack, of suffering for the misfortunes of other people, or whether you were simply a cold-blooded, heartless adventurer!"

"Did you find an answer?" he shouted above the tumult of the engine.

"I did!" she shouted back. "And I want to tell you, from the heart, Mr. Markie, that I think you are a peach!"

"Do you honestly, Enid?"

"I honestly do, Terry!"

"Then isn't it almost time," he asked, "to permit a cat or two to emerge from the dark and inhuman confinement of the bag?"

She nodded gravely. "We are now going to the Darkport station to meet a certain lady and a very uncertain gentleman who

will arrive on the 5:09 from New York. One is my stepmother; the other is her lawyer, whose name is Percy Drago."

"What," Terry inquired, "is mamma like?"

Enid grimaced. "Simply indescribable. Forty-seven. Blonde, and high, wide and handsome when she is not wearing her black look!"

"Is it difficult to please her?"

"Utterly impossible!"

"What an interesting woman! Tell me some more about mamma."

"We-ell"—reluctantly—"mamma has the 'I - was - pursued - by - a - dark - handsome - stranger - this - afternoon' complex. She's rather coy and kittenish with men, and I have always strongly suspected that she is a wild little prairie flower at heart. She's an incurable romantic; and incurably jealous. She used to walk into the living-room whenever a man was calling on me, registering one of her black looks. The poor men were simply scared to death of her. And she'd talk to them on the phone when they called me, and blast them with her scorn, poor things. You're going to like mamma, Terry."

"Oh, undoubtedly!"

"I mean, you're going to have to like her—be nice to her."

"Part of my job?"

"A very big part! Take this right turn, Terry."

The esthetic outlines of a cast-iron railroad station materialized as the road wound uphill and broadened into a parking area beyond a clump of willows.

When Terry had backed the flivver to the platform, Enid settled back and turned for a cool, thorough survey of her hired man's face.

"We have some tremendously important things to discuss, Terry, before that train comes in. To begin with, I notice that, for a freshly engaged man, you treat me with an indifference only worthy of a wife of long standing. You must be simply mad about me. Every glance must be a caress! Don't you know *anything* about making love?"

"I told you I wasn't the loving kind," Terry replied. "You seem to think I've been knocking around the world making love to every girl I've seen!"

"Now, don't be touchy, Terry. But we'll have to be convincing."

"All right," he said.

"And I must know who you are and what you are—doctor, lawyer, engineer, artist, manufacturer, wild-game hunter, or what?"

"I might pass as a tramp."

Enid shook her head. "That's out. We want something interesting but fairly civilized, too—something that has romance and glamour. How about bridge-building? Bridge-builders are *so* romantic!"

"I don't know a cantilever from a key-bolt." Terry concentrated. "Would an obscure but rising mining engineer do?"

"Splendidly! But could you get away with it?"

"If the audience isn't too technical. I've knocked about mines a good deal."

"It won't be. Well, *that's* settled. You are a mining engineer. Now let's get the background. Where did you study?"

"Boston Tech?"

"Check! Where do you mine?"

"How about South America?"

"Fine! What part?"

"Well, I've looked in at most of them, but I spent two months around Cerro de Pasco. Ever heard of Cerro?"

"Oh—vaguely. Hasn't it a thrilling sound!"

"**C**ERRO is that kind of place. Twelve thousand feet above sea level in the Andes, on the west slope. A white man can't stand the altitude for longer than six months at a stretch. Sometimes he goes home for a spell—back to the States."

Enid's eyes were glowing.

"Fine! You've just come up from Cerro, after six months at the mine. And we met—oh, at a dance last winter at—at the Ritz; and we've been corresponding ever since."

"The bud of friendship," Terry expanded, "sprang into the fragrant flower of love—"

Enid nodded eagerly. "Yes! And we became engaged this morning five minutes after you hit Darkport, realizing as we did that our love was inevitable and imperishable! Your steamer got in yesterday. Oh, that's simply perfect!"

And just then the 5:09 roared in from New York.

Amid the confusion of shouts and honking horns, as week-end guests were disgorged from the hot plush of the train and discovered by anxious week-end hosts, Terry

was distinctly aware of a woman's voice raised in anger.

He and Enid had alighted, and suddenly she had exclaimed, "Oh, there they are!" and darted off through the crowd with the agility of a brook trout.

She had gone straight to the source of the angry voice.

It was saying: "Where is my bag, porter? No, this is *not* my bag. Who did you give my bag to? I shall certainly report this to the company. Oh, you idiot! How dare you . . ."

Terry missed part of it, as the lady changed her tone, then:

"Well, why didn't you *say* so?"

This might well be mamma. And mamma, Terry supposed, was already adorned by one of her famous black looks.

His assumption was correct. It was Mrs. Louisa Cray; for Enid had now reached her. She brushed aside Enid's attempt at a kiss, and, still glowering, strode across the platform to where the flivver was parked—conspicuous in a line-up of Packards, Pierce-Arrows and Cadillacs.

A self-effacing man in dark gray followed her, carrying a bag and a suitcase.

Mrs. Cray was a large woman and, in the widow's weeds which she affected, she perhaps appeared taller and broader than she really was. Her full face was still flushed from her interview with the negligent porter. Her blond hair was eloquent of an influence more considerate than Nature's.

She was saying, in an irritable voice, as she approached where Terry stood:

"I wouldn't give him a penny, not a penny! Oh, the way the railroads are run is something terrible! Ever since the war. The awful war! And the hotels are worse. Everything is worse. I have a good mind to move out of the country." She looked at Enid.

"Enid, you look wan. That frock isn't very becoming, is it?"

Enid was standing beside her stepmother, looking so humble and suppressed that Terry hardly knew her; and behind Enid the man in gray lurked with the droop-shouldered, patient look of the terrible meek. This, Terry supposed, must be Mr. Drago.

"I made it myself, mamma," Enid said humbly. "Don't you like it, really?"

"It looks too young for you," mamma

said decisively. She addressed a frown at the battered, dusty flivver.

"It seems to me, Enid, that with all the money your poor father gave you, you could afford to get a decent car."

"Oh, mamma! You know what a spend-thrift I am," Enid said in a tone unbelievably self-reproachful.

MRS. CRAY, having scored, so to speak, three successive bull's-eyes, now permitted her roving and disapproving pale blue eyes to alight on the bashfully smiling and expectant Terry, who had just arrived at certain private and positive conclusions regarding the kind of mother-in-law mamma would make.

She caught his eye and, possibly because a flattering smile upon the lips of a dark, handsome young stranger was not an everyday occurrence, appreciably brightened.

Enid caught Terry's hand and cuddled close to his side, suddenly shy and blushing deliciously.

"Mamma, I—I have such a wonderful surprise!" She repeated the formula which had been so successful in the shabbily immaculate house of Aunt Elinore. "This—is Terry Markie, mamma. We—we became engaged this morning!"

Her eyes, actually shining with tears of happiness, sought Percy Drago.

"Mr. Drago, this is my—my fiancé, Terry Markie!"

Thus far mamma had done nothing more than to stop in her tracks and stare at the pale, feebly grinning young man. But Mr. Drago came forward to shake hands effusively, and to mumble some words of a congratulatory nature, although the effect was distinctly forced.

Mr. Drago was the owner of a pair of stained gray eyes that seemed to droop. His face was that of a man of fifty or more. It was grayish pale, and his mouth was the kind which, in repose, always slopes down pessimistically at the corners.

A smile that was not congenial lurked now on Mrs. Cray's petulant pink lips as she contemplated Terry with exaggerated interest. Suddenly she sniffed.

"Engaged!" she snorted. "It seems to me it's very sudden!"

Enid, snuggling close to Terry's side, with one of her arms entwined with one of his, said eagerly:

"Oh, it *was* sudden, mamma! When we saw each other this morning, we—we just *knew*! I met Terry last winter at a dance at the Ritz, you know."

"No, I didn't know," mamma stated unyieldingly. "*How* was I to know? I should think," she added in a grieved tone, "that you might have dropped a *hint*."

Mrs. Cray said no more until they reached the house.

"You haven't had that attic window fixed yet, have you?" she observed, then.

"Oh, mamma, I'm so careless!" Enid cried guiltily.

"How run-down the place looks! Why, it looks abandoned! Percy, look at those shutters! They've turned gray! Enid, it's shameful the way you've just let this lovely place go!"

"You'd be surprised how it eats up money, though, mamma. I'm broke *all* the time."

"Well, that isn't my fault!" mamma snapped.

"No. I didn't mean it was, mamma."

Terry climbed out and took the suitcase and handbag.

"TERRY, sweetheart, will you take the bags upstairs?" Enid said. "Mamma's room is across the hall from yours, and Mr. Drago's is the one connected with yours. I must see Martha about dinner. Come down to the kitchen, honey, will you?"

"Yes, darling."

Mrs. Cray sniffed. Evidently she did not care for that sort of romance.

Mr. Drago wrenched his gaze from the poultry run in the back yard, adjoining the huge gray barn.

Terry went upstairs with the baggage. He heard Mrs. Cray puffing behind him as he reached the top step; hastily distributed his burden, and hurried down the back stairs into the kitchen. He desired no interviews with mamma just yet.

He was disappointed to find that Enid was not in the kitchen. Martha was standing at the sink, peeling potatoes with a bright little knife. She looked up.

"Enid will meet you in the orchard as soon as she gets into another dress. You're to wait there for her."

He went out and in a moment Enid Cray, white as if she were badly frightened,

came breathlessly into the orchard. She dropped down beside him.

"What did you think of mamma?" she asked.

"I have been thinking," Terry replied, "that if you are looking for some one to smite mamma with a crude, blunt instrument, you will have to look no farther. Is that the cowardly act I am slated to perform? If so, you have only to mention where you wish the body to drop."

"Your fate," she replied, "is, as I have said, one worse than death."

"Ah! The rattlesnakes are about to be extracted from the bag!"

"In a little while, Terry," she said in a tired voice. "Now that you have met mamma, and have had a chance to judge her for yourself, the dark mystery I have so far refrained from explaining becomes easier to unfold."

"It cannot possibly be dark enough," Terry encouraged her, "to match the lady's disposition. Have I seen her at her best?"

"To be honest with you, no. I deliberately cheated."

"In about six minutes," Enid assured him, "you will probably arise from this bench foaming with wrath. Now, see here, Terence Markie; to get back to our original proposition, does five thousand dollars in the form of five one-thousand-dollar bills interest you, or does it not?"

Terry, with eyes screwed up thoughtfully, answered, "I am still thinking about Lady Lou."

ENID pouted and sighed, mildly exasperated with his stubborn pride.

"Well, I won't argue with you, Terry. And 'Lady Lou' does fit her majesty. I'll begin by giving you some idea of the predicament she left us in. My father died two years ago last month. He had been an invalid for more than a year, in great pain most of the time, and so weak it was an effort sometimes for him to talk at all—let alone argue. Until his sickness, he had Lady Lou well under control. He understood her perfectly, but he was too weak during that last year to—defend himself."

"She simply did as she pleased. The first thing she did was to get rid of me. She always hated me—I suppose we were as jealous as two women could be. Father and I were terribly fond of one another, and

she was afraid, I suppose, that I would try to influence him against her.

"I hated her, and she sensed it, of course. And it's been open warfare ever since, although I tried my best when my father was around not to show what I thought of her. We began fighting openly—Lady Lou and I—soon after he became so sick. And that made him worse. So I just caved in—surrendered."

"With father so ill, there was nothing else for me to do. She was at him day and night about something or other—or simply whining and complaining because he was a bedridden old man and she must sacrifice her youth for him. Can you imagine? And when I raised the devil, as I did just once, he asked me if I wouldn't like to go West for a while. He said it would make things easier for him if I would. So I went. And while I was gone—he died."

"He had made a will about three years before, when the doctors told him his condition might be serious. In spite of her, he was always fair and just, and in his will he was as fair as he could possibly be."

"He left Lady Lou \$100,000 outright. He left me \$50,000 outright, and \$25,000 to each of my brothers. He provided for an annuity of \$4,000 to Aunt Elinore and one of \$1,500 to Martha. His real estate he divided between Lady Lou and me. She was to have a bungalow in Pasadena and a house in Lakewood and I was to have this farm, free of all encumbrance. He knew that I loved it more than any one else in the family, and he always said it was to be mine. It has been in the family since the Revolutionary War."

"Now, bear that in mind, Terry: this farm was clear of encumbrance when father made that will—not a mortgage of any kind. In all its history, it had never been mortgaged. Well, wouldn't you suppose that that woman would have been satisfied with \$100,000 in a chunk, a beautiful house in Lakewood and a bungalow in California?"

Terry nodded.

"But she wasn't! When he died, this farm was loaded to its neck with mortgages—all made within a month of his death! What became of the money—nearly \$25,000?"

"And listen! Tacked on the end of the will in dad's poor, shaky old hand was a codicil. It said that the income from the

entire estate was to go to Lady Lou. The furniture in the house was to go to Lady Lou, and—did you notice that furniture, Terry? It's been in my family for generations. There's Sheraton and Chippendale and Heppelwhite and Duncan Phyfe—old, wonderful old pieces! And in the codicil they all went to her!

"Yes. Everything went to her—furniture and income. Dad must have refused to turn the farm over to her; he specified clearly that it was mine. And that accounts for the mortgages. I'll come back to those mortgages again in a moment."

She stopped, flushed, bright-eyed, breathless.

"TERRY," she went on quietly, "I've come to the hard part now. The last sentence in the codicil says that the entire codicil becomes void and the original terms of the will valid in case"—Enid caught her breath and hastened on—"in case Lady Lou should marry!"

"Oh," said Terry. "Oh!"

"Do you see?" Enid cried.

"I see," said Terry. "Yes, I see."

She remained silent, waiting for help from him, watching him with anxious eyes. But Terry said no more.

"Do you—" she began in a panicky voice.

"There's more to tell. Tell it," he bade her.

"The mortgages?"

"What about the mortgages?"

"They're forgeries!" Enid cried. "I've looked them up at the bank, and last week, to be sure, I paid a handwriting expert to examine them. There is no question about it. It was that that made me decide to run that ad. She forged every one of them—five signatures!"

Deep in thought, Terry nodded. "That helps," said he.

"Doesn't it?"

"Does she know that you know?"

"Hasn't an inkling!"

Terry nodded absently. "Tell me why Lady Lou and this lawyer of hers are here today."

"To try to buy the farm! She's sounded me out a half-dozen times since father died; and that's why she hasn't taken the furniture. They know I'm nearly broke, and they think they can buy it now for a song! It takes money to run this place, you know."

"Can they buy it?"

Enid uttered a hard little laugh. "I won't leave this farm until a sheriff drives me off! She's always wanted it, just as she always wanted the old heirlooms—not because she appreciates old furniture or has any sentimental attachment for it, but—"

"Because it's yours?"

"She has wanted everything I have ever had. That's her way of getting revenge. She—she'll do anything she can to hurt me!"

"Which explains," Terry advanced dryly, "why I am your fiancé."

"Well—"

Terry smote his knee. "Good Lord!" he muttered. "Good Lord!"

He stared at her. There was an agony of suspense in Enid's eyes, but Terry did not seem to be aware of its existence. He said sternly:

"Have you consulted good lawyers regarding the legality of that codicil? Couldn't it be proved that your father attached that to the will under—is 'duress' the word?"

"I've seen the best lawyers in New York and Hartford," Enid replied. "She was shrewd. She had two of the most respected, upright men in Darkport witness his signature. I have been to both of them. And they both swear that father was sane. They saw him write the codicil, and they say he wrote it of his own free will if ever a man wrote anything of his free will. There isn't a chance in court, not a glimmering!"

"In that case," Terry said slowly, "there is only one thing left to do."

"Yes, Terry."

"Some one has got to make that damned woman fall in love with him—make her marry him!"

Enid became so pale that he was afraid, for a moment, that she would faint. Her lips were trembling; her hands and arms were trembling. She could only nod her head and stare, as if fascinated, at his grimly closed lips.

"And that man," Terry said emphatically, "is going to be—me!"

Enid uttered a faint cry, and next moment her arms were about his neck. She kissed him quickly on the mouth.

Terry pushed her away roughly with a curt "As you were, my dear, as you were!"

He rubbed his mouth with the back of his hand, as if that kiss had been distasteful.

"I want you to understand my motives perfectly, Enid. I don't want you to feel



"Mamma, I—I have such a wonderful surprise! This—is Terry Markie. We—we became engaged this morning!"

sorry now or at any time. You look as if you were sorry for me already. Don't be! I'm not worth a rap to anybody—understand? You know what I was this morning when I saw your ad—a bum! For seven years I have done nothing of profit to myself or any one. I had a small, regular income from an altogether too generous aunt. A few weeks ago, it was cut off—as it should have been long before.

"I'm nobody. You couldn't have picked a man with better qualifications for your job if you had raked the earth with a fine-tooth comb. You may think I'm trying to rouse your sympathy. I don't deserve sympathy, and I don't *want* sympathy. Now, let's get down to details."

ENID seemed a little dazed. "I—I hardly know what to say to you!"

"Tell me some more about your scheme. Was it your idea?"

"We-ell," she said hesitantly, "I suggested it to my brothers when they were up about a month ago—as a sort of joke. And Ted took me seriously. He said: 'Go to it! Get hold of some fellow who needs money badly, some youngster to whom life has grown uninteresting, and put it up to him!' So we decided to pool \$5,000—winner take all."

"All right!" said Terry grimly. "Let's go."

Mrs. Cray and her lawyer were seated close together on the wide veranda when Terry reached the steps. Mamma smiled and gave him a long, interested look as he came up and stood beside her chair.

"I hope I'm not intruding," Terry said ingratiatingly.

"Oh, not at all!" cried Mrs. Cray. "Draw up a chair, Mr. Markie!"

Terry's smile widened.

"Mrs. Cray," he said, excluding Mr. Drago by a confidential manner, "would you mind stepping into the house just a moment? I have a matter of great urgency to impart to you. Will you pardon us, Mr. Drago?"

Mrs. Cray arose with an air that might have been one of expectancy and slightly pleased confusion, and might have been the first faint signals of an approaching black mood. But she followed Terry obediently into the cool, dark hall, where he saw, with great relief, that her pale blue eyes were friendly.

"Mrs. Cray," he said impulsively, "the moment I met you something told me that you were a good sport! Was I right?"

He lifted a hand in an expectant attitude. It had been a bold stroke, yet it is a firmly established fact that very few women will deny that they are good sports, and mamma, it appeared, was not of the minority.

"I was right!" Terry cried joyously.

Mrs. Cray giggled. "The minute I laid eyes on you," she retorted, "I knew you were a young devil!"

"Mrs. Cray!"

"Oh, you didn't fool me! I guess I know a live one when I see him! But you're dead wrong in one part of your guess, young man—I didn't bring a drop with me!"

"Ah! But I did!" said Terry triumphantly, and hesitated. He had proceeded far enough on the assumption that a bottle of gin *might* be on the closet shelf in his room, as Enid had told him.

"Wait!" he bade her huskily, and leaped up the stairs.

He returned with a nearly full bottle in his hand.

"Will you help me shake 'em up, madam?"

"Will I!" cried the best of sports. "If there's one kind of music I crave to hear right now, it's tinkling ice! After that ride in the train! Ugh!"

They burst upon the peaceful tranquillity of Martha in the kitchen. Martha, kneading bread dough, nodded coldly to her former mistress, and Mrs. Cray chose to ignore her very existence.

"Where's the ice-box, Martha?"

"Right behind that door, Mr. Terry," Martha answered with what, for Martha, was affability.

"Oranges?"

"In the bottom of the ice-box, sir."

The ice-box was in a large, cool pantry. Mrs. Cray entered, and Terry followed her in, closing the door after him.

"These are secret rites," he explained.

Mrs. Cray chuckled.

"I'm certainly glad you're not a dead one! We ought to have a nice week-end, Mr. Markie."

He gave her a frown.

"I don't like to hear you calling me Mr. Markie. Why not just plain Terry?"

"Well, I will if you'll call me Lou!"

"CAN'T I give you a name I invented for you? It's Lady Lou. I—well, I think it's appropriate. There's something—" His confusion was boyish. "Well—what I mean is that Lady Lou *belongs* to you!"

Mrs. Cray was not displeased. "I think you're going to be a pile of fun—uh—Terry."

"Lady Lou!" Terry exclaimed with boyish impulsiveness. "I'm mighty glad you came out!"

Lady Lou blinked her eyes rapidly. "You must have thought I was an awful old grouch, Terry, the way I carried on at the station. But that porter!"

Lady Lou with a brisk air poured orange-juice into a pitcher while Terry thoughtfully poured in gin. They had, of course, sampled the mixture themselves.

"A stiff one?" he asked cheerfully.

"Yes! Put a real kick into it!" Lady Lou urged. "We'll take this one out to them. I don't think we ought to hide in here any longer. Do you?"

"I'm perfectly satisfied," Terry objected.

"But Percy's a sensitive soul."

"Damn Percy!" Terry snorted.

For answer Lady Lou seized his unoccupied hand and squeezed it; then with a deep sigh, let it fall.

"You're a sweet boy! I think I could grow terribly fond of you myself, but *one* of us must keep a level head. Aren't you forgetting that you're a newly engaged man?"

Terry looked thoughtful, then burst out impulsively:

"I don't see why you should want to break this up!"

She patted his nearer shoulder.

"Poor little boy! I think the little drink has gone to little boy's head!"

Enid was sitting on the steps, crouched against one of the great white pillars some distance away from Mr. Drago, who was rocking back and forth with his hands dangling dangerously near the rockers. He was contemplating the approach of twilight with uncompromising sternness.

The slim shoulders of the girl seemed to droop. Her whole attitude was one of forlornness and loneliness. Enid turned her head slowly at sound of Lady Lou's firm step. Her face was pale, and her expression was compounded of impatience and sad thoughtfulness.

"Where have you been?" she asked, pouting.

"Why, sweetheart!" Terry exclaimed gaily. "We've been having a perfectly gorgeous time!" He held up the white pitcher and a silver tray sustaining four thin drinking glasses.

Enid's troubled eyes slid to her step-mother. Lady Lou smiled archly.

"I like your fiancé immensely, Enid!"

"We have a great deal in common," Terry added. "Aren't you delighted?"

"I knew he was the salt of the earth the minute I laid eyes on him at the station!" Lady Lou amplified.

A tired sigh came from Mr. Drago.

"Well, it certainly seems to be an admiration society!" Enid remarked petulantly. "You might have let me know where you were."

Mr. Drago, rocking with measured rocks, put in with a deeper sigh:

"You missed a beautiful sunset. Looked just like a battleship in action."

Terry, with a guilty air, measured out four orange blossoms; presented the largest to Lady Lou, who had resumed her chair beside Mr. Drago; gave the next largest to Mr. Drago, and saved the smallest for Enid.

"THAT'S what you get for being an unreasonable little girl," he said sternly, lowering himself beside her, and reaching for her hand, which she promptly concealed in her lap.

Mr. Drago was going into intimate, technical details regarding the beauty of the battleship in action, and Lady Lou, paying no attention, dreamily sipped her cocktail and gazed at a purple cloud bank.

A whisper from Enid: "What luck?"

He put his lips close to her ear.

"She thinks you're an awfully sweet girl."

"Yes?"

"And she thought I was too old for you!"

"Terry, don't you think you may be pushing things a little too rapidly? Don't you think it might enter her head that, for a man who's just engaged, you're rather fickle?"

Terry grinned. "You do me an injustice. I can't make love and—I didn't."

"Didn't you tell her that her eyes were like sunshine on the hills of Ireland?"

"No, I switched to evening on the Mediterranean."

"I thought you said you didn't have to make love to her."

"I don't know what you're driving at, Enid."

She said coolly: "Are you keeping the \$5,000 in mind?"

"I don't see any need at all for bringing that into the conversation," Terry said indignantly. "What I'm keeping in mind is that if I don't make good at this wild undertaking, you will lose a houseful of heirlooms, not to mention the house, and that Aunt Elinore will continue to scrub other people's clothes for a living!"

But Enid coldly and mysteriously answered: "I think you had better keep the \$5,000 in mind."

Terry looked dazed.

"How about you, Enid?"

"I'm not to be considered."

He stared at her stupidly.

"What are you mad about?"

"I'm not mad about anything!" she said angrily—and became aware that Lady Lou was listening. "But I do think it's mean the way you and mamma ran off and hid in the pantry and—and left me all alone out here!"

Terry decided that women were rich in peculiarities. What had he done? Was she becoming entangled with her rôle?

His speculations and wonderment were ended by the harsh, prim voice of Martha announcing that dinner was served.

They went in. Three candles, virginally white and slim, burned in the center of the table and gleamed sleekly upon old family silver. Terry was placed where he had sat at noon; Mr. Drago was put across from him, with Lady Lou on his left and Enid on his right.

"Will you carve, Terry?" The coldness still lingered in Enid's manner, and her expression conveyed to them that she was still upset over the mysterious pantry episode. "It's duckling," she added stonily.

"I don't deserve such punishment for merely hiding in a pantry with a lady!"

Enid compressed her lips. Lady Lou chuckled, and Mr. Drago, eager to clarify a thickening atmosphere, put in anxiously:

"Well, you two certainly missed a fine sunset. Perfectly beautiful, wasn't it, Enid?"

"I wasn't noticing it," Enid rejoined coldly, and her chin trembled. In the candle-light, Terry thought, her daintiness became fragility.

"Percy said it looked like a battleship," Lady Lou put in. "You should have seen it, dear. You and the sunset would have had a lot in common."

Anger or an excellent imitation of it sparkled hotly in Enid's eyes. Terry recalled earlier events of the day, when Enid's imitations had dazzled him, particularly those she had rendered in Aunt Elinore's laundry. He rose belatedly to the present occasion. As a make-believe fiancé he left much to be desired.

"DEAREST," he pleaded, "forgive me for seeming forgetful, but Lady Lou and I were only trying to concoct a really suitable cocktail to celebrate our—our engagement!" Enid's hand was convenient on the cloth; he patted it tenderly.

Enid glanced up from her hand guilelessly, said "Oh!" in a sweet small voice, as if his explanation and apology were acceptable, then gazed with an air charmingly defiant at her stepmother.

"Terry tells me he is thirty-eight," Lady Lou remarked pleasantly, by way of retort. "Life in the mountains keeps a man so well preserved, doesn't it? I think you are very, very wise to decide to marry a man so much older than yourself. Such a steadying influence!"

"I don't call sixteen years much!" Enid said indignantly.

Mr. Drago hastened to insert diplomacy into the widening breach:

"A man is only as old as he feels! Mr. Markie doesn't look a day over thirty, if you want my opinion!"

"Thank you!" Terry murmured gratefully. Martha had placed the duckling in front of him. He attacked it, if not expertly, at least with enthusiasm.

"When do you plan to be married?" Lady Lou inquired, as Terry successfully located a joint.

"I think in about a month," Enid said stiffly. "I don't think it's fair to a girl to be rushed."

"Tomorrow, if I had my say," Terry added.

"A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," Lady Lou pointed out.

Enid bit her under lip and looked beseechingly at the carver.

"The bird is well in hand," he said, and laughed. "I'm not referring to the duckling."

MR. DRAGO, being a man to whom puns were the soul and essence of humor, laughed outright. A faint color stained his sallow cheeks and his unhappy eyes seemed to sag less than before.

"I think you're doing very well, Mr. Markie. Did you raise this duckling yourself, Enid?"

"No," said Enid coldly.

Mr. Drago nodded approvingly. "Very wise. I wouldn't clutter up my place with them. They're little more than reptiles."

"Percy!" This with a chuckle from Lady Lou.

"Humph! Ah—I'm not referring to the edible qualities of duckling," Mr. Drago hastened, in some confusion, to add. His confusion increased when they laughed, but he pursued his topic relentlessly. "Enid, did you take my advice about white Plymouth Rocks?"

"I couldn't afford to," Enid said simply.

"If you can afford to keep chickens at all, you can afford to keep white Plymouth Rocks," Mr. Drago stated dogmatically.

"Percy," said Lady Lou, "Enid said she could not afford white Plymouth Rocks. And now that she is going to be married, her plans for the farm may all be changed."

Terry, happening to look up, saw Mr. Drago and Lady Lou exchange a glance. Whereupon he looked at Enid and detected in the depths of her innocent blue eyes a curious agitation.

"I—I was wondering about that myself," Mr. Drago agreed lamely.

"You'll live in South America, of course. Won't you?" Lady Lou inquired.

"Our plans are up in the air, as a matter of fact," Terry contributed.

Lady Lou turned to him argumentatively. "But you will have to live at the mine, won't you? And if you do go there to live, Enid, what will you do with this house?" She gave Enid no time for reply. "I came out to see about the furniture, you know. But if there's a chance of your moving to South America, you wouldn't have much use for this house, would you?"

Enid seemed dubious; at least, she had a hesitating air.

"If you'd like to sell the house, why, of course, I'd just leave the furniture here until you were ready to go. I'll pay you a fair price, too, Enid. Say \$25,000 over the mortgages."

Terry, while prepared, was slightly astonished. This was the fabled Lady Lou—the greedy, grasping Lady Lou who always got what she went after.

Enid looked bewildered. Mr. Drago toyed with his duckling, as if his mind was miles away from real estate, and Terry, whose attitude was simply that of an interested outsider, was visited by the suspicion that Lady Lou and her peculiar lawyer had rehearsed this conversation very thoroughly. Then Mr. Drago confirmed his suspicions by exclaiming with his curious lack of genuine enthusiasm:

"Well! I'd call that a fair enough offer!"

Enid turned to him eagerly, as to a friendly counselor.

"Would you, Mr. Drago?"

"I would indeed, Enid! As real-estate values go today, I should say that that is a very generous offer!"

ENID left them in mid-air as she thoughtfully ate a mouthful of duckling and another of lettuce salad. She lowered her fork finally and her air was one of indecision.

"I—I hardly know what to think, mamma," she said slowly. "Before Terry came here this morning and—and it all happened so suddenly—I was half thinking of putting the place on the market."

Lady Lou's smiling nod implied full understanding.

"And the fact that you will move to South America as soon as you're married sort of clinches the idea, you mean?"

"That's just the point," Enid said with a timid, doubtful air. "Terry had never seen the house until this morning and he's simply wild over it. Aren't you, sweetheart?"

"It's just like the house I lived in as a youngster," Terry asserted—truthfully.

"Yes, mamma. And one of the things he first told me was that, after about another six months at the mine he will be transferred to the New York office, and—and he wants to live here and commute!"

Silence, angry and mirthful, momentarily descended. Martha cleared away the dishes and brought in a deep custard pie before conversation was resumed. It was Lady Lou who resumed it. With a short, hard laugh, more like the bark of a tantalized dog than a human laugh, she went unerringly to the point.

"Well, the only way I can get this farm,

at that rate, is if your engagement is broken, isn't it?"

"I suppose it does boil down to that," Enid answered softly.

After dinner, Enid disappeared. So did Drago. Terry and Lady Lou decided to look at the moon. They got along extremely well. They had kindred spirits, it seemed. And, at precisely the right moment, Enid reappeared. She came tottering down the walk with her hands clenched before her.

She sobbed: "You kissed her! You *kissed* her! You kissed *her*! Oh!" It was wrung from her in a breath of agony.

Terry stood by, shivering and perspiring. Lady Lou had folded her arms upon her broad, deep breast. And before them Enid danced like a stricken leaf, wringing her hands. Presently she found words in abundance.

"Oh, you evil, evil woman! You hateful creature! You shan't have him! You've always taken the things I've loved! You've taken the furniture that's been in my family for years and years! You've taken my money! You're trying to take my home! You took the last few days my father had on earth! And now you're trying to take him! You—you she-devil!"

Lady Lou stalked past her in silence; mounted the veranda steps; walked heavily across the veranda and entered the house.

Enid was, by this time, sobbing in Terry's arms. His strong arms encircled her, held her close.

"Oh, Terry, Terry!" she whimpered. "How could you? How could you kiss that woman!"

He squeezed her gently, then more firmly. Her slimness and softness surprised him.

The sobs softly continued against his neck. His heart thrilled. Again he held her close, fiercely, then sighed contentedly, as a man will sigh when the ultimate woman weeps in his arms.

How changed the night! How glorious the moon! How sweet the scent of the lilacs!

ENID squirmed out of his arms. She looked up at him, and the moon shone fairly upon her white face. Tears glistened in her dark eyes, and her lips were laughing.

"It's been so realistic I almost forgot myself!" she gasped, and laughed again, softly.

"Yes," he sighed. "Hasn't it!"

"Well, what kind of progress have you

made? Was that kiss for my sole benefit?"

"She couldn't possibly have seen you sitting there," Terry said decisively. "Aside from the fact that it was the most terrible kiss that a man ever underwent for the sake of a woman, I should say that it was an unqualified success!"

"I was afraid, for a little while," Terry proceeded determinedly, "that by injecting this real-estate complication, as you did at the table, the course of true love might be completely balled up."

"Then how can you be sure that that kiss wasn't staged simply for purposes of annoying?"

"I'm absolutely certain it wasn't!"

"Well, that's just splendid!" Enid said with a sigh. "I could see that she likes you immensely. Did you make violent love to her?"

"It may sound immodest," Terry replied, "but I didn't have to! Of course," he added hastily, "we must bear in mind that that woman, while crude, is shrewd."

"Uh-huh. And that's why I am just a little skeptical."

Enid looked thoughtfully across the moonlit field. A random breeze stirred a tendril of hair at the nape of her neck. In the moonlight her wistfulness became a bewitching quality. Terry thought of the moment when she had rested in his arms. Enid's eyes, softly speculative, were looking up at him. The droop had returned.

Terry murmured with quick concern:

"You look tired, Enid. Hadn't you better be turning in?"

She seemed surprised, grateful.

"I am a wreck." She held out a small white hand. He clasped it. "Good night, Terry!"—listlessly.

"Good night, Enid!"—briskly.

When Terence Markie awoke in the morning, the first rusty red rays of the sun were slanting through the maple leaves outside his window. His eyes had opened upon the cool blush of the dawn to interrupt a most distressing dream. He dreamed he was hitched to a Roman chariot of red and gold-leaf, dragging Lady Lou in a flowing white toga up an endless marble staircase. On the curbstone Enid sat and wept bitterly.

Terry couldn't sleep after that. And he wandered about, after his bath, until he came to the stables—and there until he reached a separate building, and kicking in

a door, found himself in a room, high and square, flooded with a cool north light. A pot-bellied cast-iron stove thrust a rust-eaten pipe through the shingled roof. An easel gray with dust and age stood empty, a complicated skeleton, under the light. The studio was cluttered with the abandoned efforts and utensils of some artist.

Piles of canvases, gray-edged with floury dust, reclined against the south wall. Pencil sketches of hands, feet, legs, a man's head, a slim woman, nude, a man's horny clenched fist were pinned about the walls.

Terry strolled about the large room slowly, pausing before some sketches, frowning now and then, frequently blowing off the dust, sometimes stepping back and grunting with his head tilted to one side. There was promise in some; excellent technique of an airy sort in others. A nude, he decided, had a spirit of fantasy that the others entirely lacked. It was not bad.

He squatted on his heels and examined the canvases. They were mostly landscapes. All were by the same somewhat amateurish hand; all anonymous. He turned over a ten-by-twelve and blew the dust away.

An oval of ebony-black, an inch frame, had been blocked out against yellow-ocher. It framed the sweet, gently smiling face of a girl with dark thick hair and soft blue eyes. A self-portrait.

Here, he saw, was Enid, and here again, Enid was not. The nose lines were not Enid's. The pucker between the laughing eyes was deeper than Enid's. Life might engrave the same pucker between Enid's eyes, but it hadn't done so yet. A sepia background confessed a Whistler influence, as did also the predominant striving for tone. The paint was bloomed and faintly cracked in places. Terry finger-nailed it and found it like rock. Between 1900 and 1905, he decided.

He wiped it off carefully with a handkerchief and resumed his prowling, after placing the girl's portrait on a shelf. But his eyes slipped to it again and again, and his hands became more and more restless.

A brass-bound leather sea-chest with cover missing lured him. It was full of odds and ends: stiff brushes, hardened tubes of oils; palette knives, a bottle of fixing fluid with spray blower attached, crayons, charcoal.

Terry rummaged about until he found a block of water-color paper, a camel's-hair brush apparently unused, and a small black tin of colors. The white-enameled mixing tray was caked with a polychrome; the colors themselves were uniformly brown mud—the handiwork, he suspected, of some child.

He found a dusty faucet in a corner and methodically cleaned the colors. The mud had the hardness of years, but the colors came through presently.

The block of paper was stained down to the center leaves, probably with rain water. Toward the bottom he found a clean sheet; he tore it off; tacked it to a drawing-board and propped it on the easel.

Terry's skin was flushed darkly, and his brown eyes burned as with a fever. He removed his coat and rolled up his sleeves, then walked slowly to the window from which he could see the apple orchard.

HE RETURNED nervously to the faucet, filled a jelly glass with water, carried it across the room, and placed it on the sill beside the easel. He mixed colors with a hand that trembled; but the trembling presently stopped.

It was the first sheet of drawing paper he had touched for more than seven years.

He worked rapidly, with quick, sure strokes of the brush. He squeezed his eyes shut at intervals until, in his mind's eyes, the portrait became vivid and clear.

The Troubled Goddess that Enid was for him emerged brightly; a frowning, laughing girl in a V-necked dinner dress of a deeper blue than the Caribbean; she was glancing up as she stooped to remove a trailing twig from the hem of her blue dress. The sharp green of a fertile meadow shimmered behind her. Sunlight dripped through young leaves and touched her shining dark hair.

The artist stepped back with a curse; snatched the wet sheet from the board, crumpled it in his hand and stuffed it into the pot-bellied stove.

He tacked up a second sheet, dipped into raw yellows and fiery crimson; splashed on the virtuous page a jeering caricature; bleached blond of hair, flushed square face, blue eyes mean and small, a shining nose sister to the hawk's, a selfish, ugly mouth, a flabby chin in quadruplicate!

Pure temperament!

"Now," Terry declared savagely, snatching the jeering red face from the board and stuffing it into the stove, "I can do the other one!"

He fixed another sheet to the drawing-board with thumb-tacks; mellowed his colors to delicate cream and rose and the blue of afternoon sky. Again the Troubled Goddess emerged, but this time properly.

Character grew in the girl's face subtly. It was the eyes that laughed now, not the mouth. Otherwise the differences were slight, but the creator was pleased. He stood back finally with tilted head.

"You darling!" he said. "You—you—" It ended with a grunt of alarm.

A creaking door somewhere in the paddock checked his rhapsody. Wind? There was no wind! The soft crunching of heels in juicy sod urged haste.

Terry unrolled his sleeves and slipped into his coat. He hastily deposited the drawing-board behind the sea-chest. He had removed all evidences of his recent industry with the exception of the jelly glass half full of grayish water when the studio door was pulled part way open and Enid, with the darkness of sleep still in her blue eyes, giving them a violet hue, and a sleepy smile at her lips, poked her head inside.

"What are you doing in my holy of holies?"

"I have been making friends with all your lares and penates," he replied. "Good morning! You're up betimes, me child."

Enid yawned. "I heard you taking a shower, and it frightened me so that I couldn't sleep any more. I should have warned you that that water comes from a spring over a hundred feet down. I expected any moment to hear the thud of your falling corpse. You must have polar bear blood."

"I trust my screams were inaudible?"

"Did it leave you feeling exhilarated and courageous?"

"I have every confidence that my wedding bells will peal forth before eventide!"

"How nice! And do you tingle with anticipation?"

"No, ma'am. I just sweats."

Enid came in. "I've worked out a sort of rough program for today, Terry. I think it would be nice if we all went to the beach for a swim this afternoon."

"May I teach mamma how?"

"Do you think she'd be so gullible?"

"I told her she looked thirty-six, and she gobbled that! What's the rest of the program?"

"Why don't you take her for a walk after breakfast? It's lovely as far as the Danbury road—shade trees all the way and the nicest path! By the way, tell me what you think of Percy. Do you like him?"

Terry considered and grinned.

"ENID, he strikes me as the kind of fellow who looks like a dumbbell, acts like a dumbbell, and talks like a dumbbell to conceal the fact that you will probably find his knife entering a spot between your third and fourth ribs when you're least expecting it! Shyster?"

"Ye-es, but shrewd and—suspicious. When he seems most dazed and stupid, that's the time to mind your step. The only time he is really sincere or enthusiastic is when he's talking white Plymouth Rocks. I've had dealings with that man before. He's sly."

Terry chuckled. "It's a nice week-end party all way round, isn't it? Everybody busy as can be grinding his own little ax. Nigger concealed in every woodpile. Something tells me it isn't going to be a dull Sabbath, after all."

He looked at her admiringly, with hands on hips, a twinkle in his brown eyes. He had decided that, while Enid looked well in blue, she looked still better in pink. She was slim and trim and refreshing in a starched pink dress which revealed the slimness of her waist and the slim roundness of her hips. She was looking at him curiously with a faint smile.

"Don't you like me in this dress?"

"You look good enough to eat!" he answered, and discovered that her blushes occurred as easily as her breathing.

He said cheerfully: "Your mother had a nice studio."

"How'd you know it was my mother's?"

Terry indicated the self-portrait on the shelf.

"I thought it was you at first, but changed my mind."

"Why?" she demanded.

"Trot over there under it," he said, "and I'll tell you."

Enid moved nearer the shelf with a puzzled expression.

"There! Hold it!"

He stepped backward. "In the first place, your eyes are a shade darker; your hair wants to curl and hers didn't; your nose has more Irish in it; your upper lip does not dip so much at the corners; your lashes are thicker and longer; from chin to throat is a cleaner sweep; the pucker between your eyes is not nearly so pronounced, and your face, while oval, is not quite so thin an oval. Her cheeks are very slightly hollowed—the natural hollows of twenty-six or twenty-eight, which won't appear in yours for five or six years."

"My! Aren't you observant!"

"A properly trained fiancé notices all these things, my dear. He worships from afar but at close range he adores the details: the little flare of nostrils when one is about to be angry; the darkening and tightening of the fair blue eye when there is some deviltry afoot—" He stopped helplessly, but Enid in pink with the dew of sleep still in her eyes was irresistible. He stretched out his hand impulsively.

"Enid," he said huskily, approaching her. "Enid—"

She moved aside hastily.

"There's no need of rehearsing now!" She stopped him with something like panic in her voice. "You've got your part down—cold, Terry!"

THE twinkle returned to his eyes. He grinned. "May I teach you to swim this afternoon, too?"

"I swim like a porpoise, Terry!"

He sighed; let his shoulders sag. She watched him merrily.

"Terry, what were you doing in here?"

Terry looked alarmed. "I stumbled in here while prowling around."

"But you've turned everything upside-down! This door was supposed to have been locked. I must have left it open the last time I came out here. This was mother's refuge, and I don't believe a thing has been touched since she died—until this morning. Now, it—it looks strange—used!"

Terry said in a contrite tone: "Are you like your mother, Enid?"

Enid shook her head vigorously. "Perish the thought! Mother was a sensitive, shrinking little thing. An unkind word shriveled her. Her name was Amaranthe. It's the name of a little plant that never

withers. Mother wilted when she was hardly thirty—just wilted and died. Why do you suppose parents give their children such fateful names? Why is a Percy either a sissy or a big bully?"

"Or an Enid an Enid?" Terry said dryly.

Enid gave him her wistful little grin. "What is an Enid?"

"An Enid," Terry answered carefully, "is a rare flower that—that blushes unseen on the stony hillsides of certain parts of Connecticut. It is noted for its fragrance, its delicacy of form, the brightness of its coloring and for its rare qualities of courage and independence. Only one Enid is likely to be found nestling among the rocks of one county. Very rare specimen. Famed among botanists for its bewildering elusiveness, its endearing young—"

"While, on the other hand," Enid broke in gravely, "a Terry is a quaint animal born within the very shadow of the Blarney Stone in Ireland. At an early age it cultivates a lovingness of disposition which at maturity seems to ooze from its pores like honey from a comb. It is also a nomad among the lesser vertebrates. It is famed for the deceiving gentleness of its attitude toward any member of the opposite sex, the lying softness of its brown eyes, and the—the thinness of its pelt. Very rare specimen. Among wild-game hunters it is renowned for the elasticity of its heart, a pair of which if inflated with air would make perfectly wonderful swimming wings—"

"You have left out the important fact that a Terry bites viciously when aroused," Terry interrupted sternly.

"Oh, yes! A Terry must be well chained when fed meat!"

Terry looked despondent. He brightened in a moment.

"But when a Terry meets up with an Enid," he began hopefully, "the Terry does not devour the Enid alive, as is popularly supposed—"

"No, the remarkable little blossom simply looks the other way, and the Terry goes on about his business, a wiser and a better Terry!"

The brassy clangor of a bell, being swung by a vigorous and invisible arm at the house, interrupted the Nature class.

Terry gave Enid an inquiring glance, and Enid looked at her tiny gold wrist-watch.

"Heavens! It's nearly nine! Martha is

requesting that the delegates to the ax-grinders' convention convene for breakfast," she explained.

SOMETHING had happened; something was obscurely but decisively the matter. Lady Lou, large and calm, was toying with a grapefruit spoon and the half of an Indian River grapefruit when Enid and Terry entered the dining-room.

Her greeting to Enid was curt but cheerful; her greeting to Terry was curt but not so cheerful. There was a certain cool dignity in her bearing. But it was not this alone that Terry sensed when he entered the room. Something seemed to hang upon the air like an unspoken word.

Mr. Drago looked anything but cheerful. There was a glimmer in his drooping pale eyes that Terry could not analyze. There was something inimical, something strangely aloof and hostile in that glimmer; something that seemed to say, "I don't like you, young fellow, and if you go very much farther, I am prepared to tell you why!"

Terry worked hard after breakfast. Lady Lou was cold; she was chilly. He had, it seemed, failed her about the house. Lou melted—a little. She was alone, friendless. If he wouldn't help her— But he would. If she wanted the house, she must have it. Could he persuade Enid? He thought he could.

He found Enid straightening up the room he had slept in. She was spanking the pillows on the bed when he walked into the room. She stood erect with parted lips and bright, alarmed eyes.

"Enid," he said cheerfully, "you've sold a house!"

She looked at him in bewilderment.

"What house?"

"This one!"

Her bewilderment grew. "What are you talking about?"

"I've just had a set-to with mamma."

"Yes?"

ONE of her black moods came on and I squelched it according to directions. Then she told me what the blackness had been about. I have a strong hunch that that quarrel she had under the tree this morning before breakfast ended up by Percy giving her a new line of strategy to try. So I've been thoroughly—strategized!

I'm no friend of hers, says she, because I took your side in the house argument last night at dinner!"

"How perfectly absurd!"

"Yes, isn't it! But that's her story, and she's going to stick to it. In short, the course of true love has struck a knot, and I told her I'd come up and use my influence as a fiancé with you. Is my influence as a fiancé still in force?"

And not until then was Terry struck by a novel strangeness in Enid's attitude. Her first words stunned him.

"Terry," she began, in a voice that came low and halting, "I—I've come to the conclusion that you—you're not the man I wanted for this job, after all."

He gasped, "Why, what—"

Enid went on regardless, with an air of picking her way with the greatest difficulty.

"I—I've thought it over. The man I had in mind wasn't you—at all! You're too—too decent. I simply will not let you go on with it!"

It took Terry some little time to recover from his astonishment; then a wave of red flooded his face, and presently he found his voice.

"Enid, do I have to tell you again that I was a bum—a park-bench bum—when you took me in yesterday?"

"That's all the more reason why I will not take advantage of you! You say you've lived a worthless life. Maybe you have, Terry; but that doesn't mean you're going to have a worthless future. If you really wanted to try, I know you could be tremendously successful. It's in you. I absolutely refuse to let you go on with it," she ended decisively.

Terry's color deepened. His eyes glinted angrily. He clenched his fists.

"I don't see for the life of me where you ever got this idea of me being such a fine-spirited man. I tell you I'm a bum."

"I won't argue with you, Terry!"

"Argue?" he snorted. "Look here," he said roughly. "You seem to be overlooking something, Miss Cray. You seem to be overlooking the fact that maybe I *want* to marry that woman!"

She looked at him with round, astonished eyes. "Terry Markie, now you're telling lies."

"Am I? You think so? You don't know much about bums, do you? You seem to

have the idea that a bum's life is a bed of roses. Go out and make a success at anything, eh? If you're ever as down and out as I was yesterday, I wish you'd just try that. Why should I get a job when I have a chance to marry a woman who's rolling in money?"

"Terry Markie!" the girl gasped, horrified. "You don't know what you're talking about. You don't mean that! You don't mean a word of that!"

"Why don't I?" he snarled. "What do you know about me, anyhow? How long have you known me? You've been feeling around for the truth, and you're going to get it! I'm going to marry your step-mother, not because I care a snap about your measly five thousand, but because I'm tired of being starved and kicked around. And because, maybe, working doesn't appeal to me. No, you didn't think of that. You sentimental girls never think of realities. I'm going to marry that woman, and I'm going to marry her as soon as I can make her do it!"

Enid stepped back. Her expression was one of contempt, loathing.

"You nasty thing!" she gasped. "You—you cad!"

"Call me all the names you please," Terry said indifferently. "I was afraid this was coming. I don't like to hurt your feelings, but you had to have the truth. And—now, I guess we can go on, can't we?"

Enid sank down on the edge of the bed, trembling. Her back was toward him, her shoulders rising and falling rapidly as she breathed in nervous gasps. She gripped her fists at her sides, rose slowly at last and faced him with hard, glittering eyes, a pale compressed mouth.

"Yes," she said faintly. "I think we can go on—now."

He smiled wryly. "I'm glad you see it from my point of view, Miss Cray."

"You can still call me Enid," she said stiffly.

Terry nodded. "Yes, we must not make it any more difficult than it already is. I was speaking, I believe, about selling this house to Lady Lou."

"But you know very well I will not sell this house to her!"

"Of course. Of course. I hadn't got that far in my explanation. What I started to say was that she will not be convinced I

have a friendly feeling for her unless I can tell her that I have influenced, persuaded you to sell her the house. My idea is simply that you will *agree* to sell the house. That does not mean you will sell it."

She looked at him steadily through a long silence. Then in a cold voice:

"How can I trust you in a deal which may mean I will lose my home when you turn out to be the kind of a man who would deliberately marry a middle-aged woman for her money?"

"If you will give me a reason showing how I can in any way profit by turning such a deal," Terry replied stiffly, "I may be able to answer that question."

"I think you've given reasons enough!"

"I see," he said sadly, "that you have made the common mistake of women in business of injecting sentiment where sentiment never should be!"

"I must trust some one!" Enid cried. "I had put all my trust in you! I know nothing about real-estate deals."

"Your common sense should tell you that you can't be parted from this house without signing papers—deeds and so on. She wants to give you a check for \$25,000—now! Take it!"

Enid wavered.

"We-ell—shall I go down with you?"

"No. Let me go down and tell her. You can get Mr. Drago. She'll insist on having him, anyway."

"Will you do the talking?"

"All of it," Terry promised.

HE WENT downstairs. The scornful look in Lady Lou's eyes as he appeared on the veranda retired when she beheld the size and determination of his grin. He really felt dizzy and a little nauseated, but he dropped into the chair and impulsively hitched it closer to hers.

"Do you love me now?"

"You didn't wheedle that girl into selling!" Lady Lou gasped.

"If I did, could you use a nice, handy young husband around the house?"

"I don't know but what I might, at that!"

He bent over her eagerly, grasped her hand, and his expression was stern.

"Is that a promise?"

She shook his hand away, drew back.

"Don't get foolish now, Terry. Did you get her to sell?"

"Will you marry me?"

"Answer me, you young devil!"

Terry sighed. "I did, my dear, I did! The house, the farm, the rolling acres are yours!"

Lady Lou patted his nearest cheek.

"You're a dear, sweet boy. Now run along and get Mr. Drago."

"I sent Enid."

"Why! You just think of everything, you angel!"

"Where you are concerned, my dear, I intend to leave no stone unturned. I am going to marry you tomorrow!"

"Why, you silly! You're no such thing! I'm old enough to be your mother!"

"When?" he growled. "When?"

She chuckled. "Why—why, you're rushing me off my feet! Don't be so hasty! Give me time to think!"

"We'll get the license in the morning! We'll be married in the afternoon!"

Terry had recovered her hand, was staring hypnotically into her moist, pale blue eyes.

The arrival of Enid with Mr. Drago forestalled whatever reply Lady Lou might have made.

Mr. Drago wore a look of dazed incomprehension. Enid was very pale and her expression was doubtful.

"Louisa," Mr. Drago announced with only a trace of the insincerity which colored his enthusiasm, "Enid has decided to sell, after all!"

"So Terry has been telling me!" Lady Lou graciously answered. "It's so dear of her!"

Enid sank down on the veranda rail, pouting her lips and gazing uncertainly at Terry.

"I didn't realize that Terry—I mean, we—might be in South America for over a year."

"Percy and I will stay over tomorrow," Lady Lou decided promptly, "and go into Darkport. We'll have Mr. Sherwood attend to the deeds first thing. I'm going to pay cash, of course, darling, just as I said. I'll give you my check the very minute the deeds are signed!"

"I—I don't know," Enid answered thoughtfully. "I—I still feel doubtful. Oh," she exclaimed, "I love this old place so! I—I hate to see it go!"

Terry whispered in Lady Lou's nearest ear:

"Take my advice and give that check to her now! She's going to change her mind again if you don't!"

Lady Lou looked dubious. But she beamed on Enid, and after a moment's talk with Drago wrote out the check, rose and extended it to Enid.

"This seals the bargain, honey. Now, when can I take possession?"

"When I leave for South America," Enid replied, gazing dazedly at the check.

Lady Lou glanced at Terry.

He said: "I think it would be wise to set a definite date, darling. Say—say a week from tomorrow." To Lady Lou: "Will that be satisfactory?"

"Perfectly!"

"But it's rushing things so!" Enid wailed.

"GOODNESS! Enid, it shouldn't take you more than an hour to get ready to go. You haven't any furniture to bother with, you know." And Lady Lou smiled radiantly.

Enid looked at the check, then at Terry, and back to the check again.

"That's true," she faltered. "I—I suppose a week is enough. Terry, I—I'd like to talk it over with you—dear." She started away, looking back at him appealingly.

The moment had come, Terry decided, to demonstrate clearly on which side of the fence his affections lay. He seemed reluctant to leave Lady Lou's side. He gazed at her and sighed.

Enid said in a hurt voice: "Don't you want to come?"

And he replied curtly, impatiently: "Yes, I'm coming."

His glance lingered for another questioning moment on Lady Lou's flushed, contented face. But she was too happy to realize that his eyes were asking her an ardent question.

He caught up with Enid as she started down the steps, and they moved on slowly and in silence toward the bench in the ancient apple orchard. And in silence Enid looked at him when he had taken his place on the bench, not near her but two feet or more away. Then with slow, deliberate motions she tore the check in tiny pieces and cast them in the grass at his feet.

Terry looked at her inquiringly.

"If you think you're going to get a commission out of this deal," she said coolly,

"I want to assure you that you are badly mistaken!"

"Still mixing sentiment with business?" Terry replied dryly.

She glared at him. "I'll not let myself be tricked by any gentlemanly adventurer!" she snapped.

"Do you think you have been?" he said softly.

"I'm very sure I would have been!" Enid cried.

His sigh might have been one of exasperation.

"It's perfectly all right about the house, Enid," Terry said. "You can stop worrying about your home. It isn't hers now, and will never be hers. It cannot possibly go to her until or unless you sign deeds making it over to her—which you are not going to do."

His firmness and sureness seemed to relieve Enid; but there was a light in her eyes that did not bode well for Terry.

"Do you think the scheme accomplished what you expected it would?"

"I told her she was going to marry me tomorrow," Terry replied, "and she didn't say she wasn't!"

Enid managed a smile but the malice in her eyes became more perceptible.

"How wonderful you are!" she breathed. "I can't understand how any woman could resist you as long as she has!"

It caught Terry with his guard down. He had never trained his emotions to obey the cold machinations of his intellect—the artistic temperament seldom does. A flame of anger swept up and seemed to burst like a skyrocket.

"So long as you are bound to have the truth," he roared, "I'll give it to you! I am going through with this horrible farce simply and entirely because I'm so damnably in love with you that I'd wring her fat, greedy, selfish neck if I thought it would help you!"

The rich bronze of his skin had faded to a zinc-like white. Enid stared at him with momentary incredulity, then sprang up from the bench. Her face became rosy; tears filled her eyes, but they were not tears of sorrow.

Hysterically she began to laugh. Distressingly shrill, her laughter rang through the ancient apple orchard. And she checked it as suddenly, gazing down at the bewildered young man with withering scorn. Then she went away hastily.

Everybody's Magazine, July, 1924 .

The poison distilled by Enid's withering scorn was still boiling and foaming in his veins when Terry went in to dinner. The others were seated at the table. Lady Lou gazed from his stormy eyes to Enid's pale distressed face and her eyes brightened.

"WELL! Have you turtle-doves been quarreling?"

"You might call it that," Enid coolly said, and quietly added: "You might and, then, again, you mightn't. Each of us told the other a few things calculated to be of benefit to the other's soul, and I decided I had had about enough."

Lady Lou's eyes became brighter still.

"Enough of what, dear?"

"Enough of Mr. Terence Markie!"

"You don't mean to sit there and tell me," Lady Lou cried, "that you dear children have broken your engagement!"

"The dear children have done nothing else!" Enid said.

"Well, it's mighty lucky you children found out before it was too late," Lady Lou reasoned philosophically. "So many mistakes go beyond the altar."

Terry was sitting on the veranda alone after dinner watching the Sunday tourists go by, when Lady Lou came out with a novel in her hand, and, without a word to him, occupied a chair at the farther end of the veranda, opened the book, and began reading.

Enid appeared presently with a bundle of bathing-suits over one arm.

"Are you people ready for a swim?"

"Have you my suit there?" Lady Lou wanted to know.

"I have, mamma; and here's one of Ted's that will fit Terry, and one of Billy's that ought to make Percy a dream. He's back there harassing the chickens again. Terry, shall we go out and get the flivver?"

They walked in silence to the barn and, once in its shadow, Enid said listlessly:

"Well, it looks as if the beans are preparing to spill. Percy smells a rat, and he's got mamma wondering. Of course, he won't guess the truth within a thousand miles."

"What puzzles me," Terry said, frowning, "is his attitude of dislike."

"I know! And I can't make head or tail of it. You've been nice to him—much nicer than I have been; and he looks at you as if he'd enjoy murdering you."

"He's sensed something," Terry argued. "And what worries me is that he may be able to confirm his suspicions—even if they won't lead him anywhere. I mean, he may find out I've lied about some things."

Terry cranked up. When they drove out, Lady Lou and Drago were waiting at the veranda. Enid climbed out and Terry said:

"Lady Lou, will you sit in front with me?"

Lady Lou did not reply. With compressed lips she climbed into the back seat.

"Hop in, Percy," she said pleasantly.

Enid climbed back in beside Terry.

"Unless," she said, "you'd prefer to have me ride on the spare tire!"

"I can stand it if you can," Terry said cheerfully.

Terry was in his swimming-suit, looking over the gray waters of Long Island Sound and the brilliant Sunday afternoon assemblage which had motored from miles around to patronize it, when Enid, in a gay little swimming-suit of blue and white, appeared. Its design or its darkness seemed to emphasize the whiteness of her arms and legs. She had the slim, straight figure of a boy.

"Does my contempt really annoy you?" she asked.

"If you would look at this in a business way," Terry replied, "you would soon realize that your contempt isn't helping me along."

Her gaze became scornful. "After what you told me this morning, I realize fully that my contempt of a man like you is simply a part of my character. I'm sorry it bothers you."

THEY turned and started toward the pavilion entrance. Lady Lou was coming from a doorway, stockinged, capped, and warmly clothed. The skirt was long and the blouse was full. She saw Terry and Enid and came toward them, scrutinizing them critically. She had seemingly softened.

"What a handsome couple!" she said. "It's a shame you two children called off your engagement. Terry, you have a fine pair of shoulders. You look like an athlete!"

Terry rejoined eagerly: "You're coming for a swim with me, aren't you?"

"Not me! The thermometer says fifty-six. I'll sit in the sun with Percy while you two freeze."

Mr. Drago, incredibly white and thin in a suit several sizes too large for him, affirmed this. "Yes, we'll sun ourselves in the sand. All I want is a sun-bath."

He, too, was staring at Terry's shoulders.

"How did you get so tanned, Mr. Markie?"

"It's copper stain," Enid informed him.

"How interesting!"

"We may get up nerve for a dip later,"

Lady Lou added. "Run along, children!"

Terry consulted Enid. "Are you swimming, sister?"

"I'll race you to the raft and back!"

And when they had left Lady Lou and Mr. Drago sitting in the sand:

"Faint heart ne'er won fair water nymph!"

"It isn't the bathing-suit entirely," Terry replied, "although major crimes have been committed for less. I believe it will do her good to think things over a while longer. I'm going to try giving her a dose of her own medicine."

"Good medicine," Enid agreed.

She splashed into the water, squealed and sprang back.

Terry contemplated the translucent, slate-blue depths, took a brave breath, and dived. When he came to the surface, Enid was back on the beach shivering. She announced that the water was too cold and Terry started for the raft with a powerful blood-warming trudgeon. When he returned to the beach he saw her standing by the pavilion doorway in conversation with three laughing young men.

A girl's shrill, excited voice called his name as he started up the beach. Terry turned to recognize the freckled, astonished face of Virginia Warren.

"Terry Markie! As I live, it is you!"

Virginia shook his wet hand enthusiastically. She was wearing bright sport clothes and her face, Terry perceived through momentary confusion, was fuller but no less animated than it had been seven years ago.

I THOUGHT I was seeing a ghost!" she gasped. "For the love of Mike, Terrible, spill a bean! What are you doing in blighted America? What are you doing in Darkport? Last thing I heard, you were languishing in a Zanzibar jail! What about all these horrible reports I've been hearing?"

Terry glanced anxiously at Lady Lou.

"Reports?" he said vaguely.

"Why, we heard you'd been arrested in South America for half killing a sailor, and from there the agitation spread into China, Arabia, and finally into the Sahara."

"I've been knocking around a little," Terry admitted.

She looked at him affectionately. "You're the same old Terry. Porter will be mad to see you! He's home working now. Are you alone?"

"I'm here with the Crays. Do you know the Crays?" he asked hopefully.

"Enid Cray? I certainly do." Miss Warren looked puzzled. "I didn't know you knew Enid. Gracious! Is—is this serious, Terry?"

He flushed. "Lord, no!"

She still seemed mystified. "Well, you and Enid run in tonight. There'll be a gang over."

Terry shook his head firmly. "Can't. Mrs. Cray is up."

"Oh, Lord!"

Virginia Warren examined him shrewdly. "Terry, are you still packing that old grouch? Have you done anything since the night of that—that bonfire?"

"No, Virginia."

She sighed. "Won't you talk to Porter?"

Terry shook his head firmly.

"Will you call Porter up this evening—just to say hello?" she persisted.

Lady Lou was now staring at him, and Mr. Drago's drooping eyes were occupied with Miss Warren's trim gray-silken ankles.

Terry agreed nervously. "Yes, yes, I'll call him."

Miss Warren started toward an automobile, where a girl and two young men were impatiently waiting. One of the young men was tooting the horn in measured blasts. She turned back to him impulsively.

"Terry, you're so queer! Is anything wrong?"

"Not a thing, Virginia!" He shot out his hand. "Awfully glad to have seen you again!"

MISS WARREN accepted his hand as if reluctantly. "I don't believe it! You act as if you were scared to death."

And she went on to the car. Terry saw them start, but he did not see them stop again when the car reached the end of the pavilion. Miss Warren had suddenly seized the hands of the young man at the wheel.

"Now, keep your temper, Tom. I've got a mystery on my hands and I must see that girl in the blue bathing-suit over there. Park, Tom, park!" And she was out and across the sand before the astonished young man had brought the car to a stop.

She grabbed Enid by the elbow, and smiled at the three young men in bathing-suits.

"Boys, will you let me have her? It's tremendously important, really!"

She piloted an astonished Enid to an unoccupied bench, and commanded excitedly:

"Tell me about Terry Markie!"

"Do you know him?" cried Enid.

"I guess I ought to know him!" Miss Warren said briskly. "We were as near being engaged at one time as any two people on this storm-tossed sphere have ever been! I didn't know *you* knew him. You never *said* you knew him!"

And Enid dazedly answered: "Oh—I—I don't know him well!"

Miss Warren's perplexity grew.

"What's he doing in Darkport?"

"Just—just v-visiting us," Enid stammered, looking at the older girl with round, alarmed eyes.

"I don't understand it," Virginia proclaimed. "I don't understand it at all. He's just back from abroad?"

"Y-yes."

"And you're the first person he's looked up?"

"I—I—why, I suppose so!" Enid gasped.

"Do you know if he's going to paint again?"

"Paint!"

"Yes! Paint!"

"Why—why—why—I didn't know he painted!"

Miss Warren groaned. "You didn't know he painted! I thought you *knew* him."

"Oh, only slightly, Virginia."

"And you don't even know about that bonfire of his in Florence, I suppose?"

"Bonfire? Florence?" Enid echoed.

Miss Warren stared at her sternly. "Enid Cray, are you kidding me?"

"Heavens, no!"

I KNEW I smelled a mystery! I knew it! You say you know Terry Markie only slightly, but you're the first person he's seen since he's come back to America. And on

top of that you tell me you never heard of the Florence bonfire! Good heavens, child, I wish I knew what it was all about! I just this minute left him on the beach. He acted like a criminal. What's the matter with him, Enid?"

"I—I haven't the slightest idea. He—seemed natural enough to me!"

"Now, Enid, don't think I'm trying to butt in, but where Terry Markie is concerned I'll stop at nothing. If ever a man needed a guardian it's Terry. Porter and I used to guard him as if he were a prima donna. We heard only a short time ago that an aunt of his in Boston had cut off the allowance she'd been sending him. And we've been worried stiff ever since. *What* is he going to do?"

"He—he hasn't said anything about his plans to me," Enid answered, in a strange, small voice.

Miss Warren glanced at her curiously. "And you didn't even know he was an artist! Good night! Why, that man had more promise as a youngster of twenty-one than any painter in America! He had the world by the ears! Well, it was before your time, of course, dear."

Enid, pale and drooping, could only stare.

"He took prizes at exhibition after exhibition and—Enid, I've got to tell you about that bonfire in Florence! It was a tragedy—a perfect tragedy! Brother and Terry and I went abroad a little over seven years ago, to study. Brother hadn't developed then and we were both doing a little sketching. But we went along chiefly to watch Terry walk into his stride. We intended to stay over there two years and maybe longer. Well, we didn't stay there a month!"

"From the minute we landed in France—Havre, it was—Terry kept clamoring for Florence. Wanted to go to Florence. The Louvre didn't interest him. Wanted to see the Uffizi collection. Well, we landed in Florence late one afternoon. Porter had wired ahead to some friends and they had taken a studio apartment for us. So we stacked our things in it and went to the Uffizi. Have you ever been in the Uffizi, Enid?"

Enid dumbly shook her head.

"Well, my dear, you go around a corner into a court and you walk right into Michelangelo's David and Botticelli's Perseus. And off of that is a gallery—the first two

rooms all Botticellis. Of course, even little dumbbell I had never dreamed that anything like them existed *anywhere*. But I wish you could have seen Terry Markie!"

"He took one look at the Primavera and walked over to it as if he were hypnotized. He just stood there with his head hanging and his shoulders sagging and his fingers twitching—a picture of despair. I can see him now. It was just as if some one had hit him a staggering blow in the chest and he was swaying and trying to recover his balance."

"I was busy looking at other things and didn't notice him at first; then I went over to him and began to rave about it myself—gushing, you know. Terry didn't say a word. Simply stood there."

"**H**E MUST have stared for all of ten minutes—and never a word out of him! He turned finally and gave me a look, and I hope I'll never see a look like it in a man's eyes as long as I live! Empty and—dead! I thought he was ill—terribly ill. Well, he was ill all right, but I thought it was the heat, or the long train ride from Paris. I didn't dream—"

"Brother began to grow anxious about that time. He asked Terry what the trouble was, and all that Terry said was simply, 'I'm through, I'm through, I'm through.'"

"You can bet we didn't see any more of the Uffizi *that* day. We got a cab and Terry sat in his corner like a man in a trance. Enid, it was simply horrible. I saw a child knocked down by an automobile once, and the feeling it gave me was exactly the same. Something in Terry was dying—I *knew* it!"

"As soon as we reached the studio Terry gathered up his stuff—pictures, sketches, brushes, colors—everything!—and stacked them in the fireplace. Brother didn't come to life until Terry had struck a match. We simply goggled at him—too scared and surprised to do anything."

"When Terry struck the match brother jumped out of his chair and yelled. Simply yelled! Didn't say anything, any words, you know—just acted as if some one had stabbed him. Then he rushed at Terry!"

"He grabbed Terry around the waist and threw him half-way down the room, then stamped on the match. About that time I came to life and started snatching the things out of the fireplace. It seems like a



Terry placed the check-book and fountain pen in Lady Lou's lap. "Twenty-five thousand," he said.
"Is that right, Enid?"

nightmare when I look back on it now. It was almost dark in the court, and the studio was thick with dust—layers of dust. And every time one of us moved the dust spouted up and floated.

"Terry was trying to get back to the fireplace and brother was trying to hold him back. I finally had hysterics and sat down in the middle of the floor and added to the general confusion by laughing one minute and bawling the next.

"Brother told me afterward he knew just what had happened. It had happened to artists before, and it will happen again. He was trying to overpower Terry physically—if he could prevent him from burning his things, Terry *might* come to his senses and be willing to listen to reason. If he destroyed them—too late!

"Well, there I was sitting, laughing and screaming, and choking with the dust, with the walls seeming to be coming down around me as those two wild creatures went thrashing around the room. And suddenly it became quiet. It all stopped like that. Dead silence. Have you ever been lost in a fog? Well, that was how I felt!

"I held my breath, listening, wondering what had happened. And then, down at the other end of the room, a yellowish glow started, and it grew larger and brighter, and in a moment there were other glows, and I saw a streak of greenish light. That was Terry—finishing what he had started!

"Brother crawled over to me in a moment with the tears rolling down his face, and we sat and held hands like a couple of scared kids, watching him, talking about it in whispers. And that was the end of Terry Markie, the boy genius! I thought *every one* knew about that bonfire."

"He—he just stopped painting?" Enid got out in a choked voice.

"Utterly and absolutely, my dear! Packed his bags and went. That same night! Didn't say where he was going. Didn't say good-by. Didn't say anything. Just up and went!

"We heard from him a week or so afterwards, from Brindisi. Only a note. He apologized for acting the way he had but said it was inevitable. We should try to forgive him and forget him—and a lot of other maudlin things. Poor kid! Well, believe me, Enid, the artistic temperament is an awful thing to understand! I couldn't.

I chased down to Brindisi after him. I believe I would have swum the Adriatic after him—then. But there wasn't a trace. He'd flown."

Miss Warren sighed.

"If I hadn't known Terry so well, I would have been saved an awful lot of worry. I thought he might go to the dogs. I thought some bad designing woman might get her hands on him. But then I argued that so long as that aunt of his sent him a livable allowance, he might get through that phase without damage. He's so sensitive and so darned generous and so thoughtless with his money when people come to him in trouble. I say I understand him but I really don't. It simply isn't for us common clay to understand genius—real genius like his. What has he been doing, Enid, wandering about the world like a lost soul?"

"J-just wandering," Enid said faintly.

Miss Warren looked at her quizzically.

"Hasn't said a word about plans?"

"Not a word!"

"I WISH I knew what to do about him. We've been terribly anxious. For heaven's sake lay yourself out to buck him up. If you can just get him started painting again there are going to be a whole lot of new stars in your little crown."

Enid looked miserably at the Sound and back again to Miss Warren.

"How could it be done?"

"That's a big question, Enid. I gave it up years ago. Some strong emotion might start him—it has with other men. Wasn't it Corot who got so discouraged, then fell in love with somebody and did the most wonderful work of his life from that time on? Well, Corot or somebody. Enid," she said sternly, "speak up. Is Terry Markie in love with you?"

"How—how could he be?" Enid gasped.

Miss Warren sighed. "Well, love moves in mysterious ways its wonders to perform! Terry wouldn't say so if he were—not if he's the same old Terry. As a love-maker he's the most perfect imitation of a graven image there is!"

She gazed at Enid with lowering brows.

"Why shouldn't he fall in love with you? Most men seem to, and God knows you're the one girl in a million who could boss him the way he ought to be bossed."

When Virginia Warren had gone, Terry

walked slowly over to where Lady Lou and Mr. Drago were sitting in the sand. Lady Lou examined his profile curiously.

"Wasn't that Virginia Warren you were talking to, Terry?" she inquired amiably. Terry said "Yes" absently and waited for the deluge. It did not come. Was it possible she hadn't overheard Virginia's strident young voice?

"I knew her a good many years ago," he said carelessly.

"Oh!" said Lady Lou, without visible interest.

Drago simply went away.

"What's the matter with Mr. Drago?" he asked her. "He looks at me as if he'd like to stick a knife into me. What did I ever do to him?"

Lady Lou smiled. "Maybe he's a little jealous, Terry!"

"Jealous!" Terry gasped.

"You've been awfully attentive to me, you know," she said.

"Well, you're free, aren't you?"

"Terry, he's been courting me on and off for years! But we won't mind him—will we? I'm glad he knew enough to give us a minute or two alone!"

"Oh!" said Terry. "I thought you were angry at me."

"Angry? Why?"

"You seemed so distant."

"But I'm not, silly! It's *you* that have been acting strangely."

"Oh, my Lord!" he groaned. "Listen to her!"

"Do you care about me—cross your heart?"

"Will you marry me tomorrow?" Terry replied with determination.

"I'll compromise with you," Lady Lou replied. "I'll let you take me for a canoe ride tonight!"

Terry's expression was one of alarm.

"A canoe ride!"

"Yes! On Lake Mennapog. I've been thinking how nice it would be all afternoon. Don't you want to take me? Just you and me in a canoe under the big moon? Then you can say what you want to say and I—I'll just listen!"

"We'll go on a picnic and have supper on the shore of the lake. Then, afterward, while you're paddling, I'll—listen! There won't be any one to interrupt. I hate the way people are all the time interrupting us.

Does that appeal to you—you big, stupid boy?"

It didn't appeal to the big, stupid boy, and it didn't make sense. Terry, still looking uncertain, gradually came to a vague conclusion that what Lady Lou really wanted was a little more romance with her courting.

"What will we do with Enid and the jealous Percy?" he asked practically.

"They can go in another canoe. If they don't want to go, we'll just go by ourselves. If they want to disapprove—let them!"

A weary little voice beside him said: "Disapprove of what?"

Terry hardly glanced at her, so that he did not observe that a tremendously altered Enid had crept up close beside him: an Enid with tragic eyes and tremulous mouth.

Lady Lou explained cheerfully: "Terry and I have just been saying how lovely it would be to have a picnic supper over on Lake Mennapog and then go canoeing in the moonlight."

Enid nodded listlessly. She had hardly heard, and her murmur was noncommittal.

Lady Lou snapped: "Don't you want to go, Enid?"

Enid emerged from her daze with a half-hearted "Yes! Of course I do!" Lady Lou went after Drago then.

"ENID, it's all over but the shouting!" said Terry.

"Really?"

"She's been bluffing. Admitted it!"

Enid nodded unhappily. "It's that bathing-suit. I knew the instant I saw you in it that she'd weaken."

"She called me her big, stupid boy!"

"Did she? I suppose you won't let her out of the canoe until she surrenders."

"I tell you, Enid, she *has* surrendered!"

During the drive home Lou sat in the front seat with Terry and held his hand whenever driving conditions permitted and frequently when they didn't; and it seemed impossible for her to wrench her dreamy, longing gaze from his stern, handsome young profile.

The conspiracy was working with the mechanical precision of a timed bomb. Lady Lou had fallen in love at last!

Enid slipped out through the back door of the barn as soon as Terry stopped. She waited to make sure that Terry was

accompanying Lady Lou and Mr. Drago to the house before she went on.

When she reached the paddock, she ran. She had been thinking for some time of a jelly glass full of slate-colored water that she had seen on the window sill in the studio that morning. She thrust open the studio door and at the threshold stopped and breathlessly looked about her.

Scraps of paper on the floor she hastily assembled, but the scraps were too tiny to piece together. Some of them were red, others were yellow ochre.

She poured them carefully into a chair and ransacked the old sea-chest that her grandfather had borne with him on whaling voyages. She encountered a camel's-hair brush with the bristles still damp. Next a tin of water-colors, still moist and soft.

And suddenly she lifted the drawing-board which stood behind the chest—and gazed down at the Enid of yesterday who frowned and laughed at her from between gnarled trunks of apple trees with the green of a meadow shimmering in the distance.

Enid carried the drawing-board to the dusty north window as if it were so fragile that a breath might destroy it; walked gingerly on tiptoe. Tears filled her eyes as she stared down at it; and she let them trickle down her cheeks.

"He was lying this morning!" she whispered. "I knew he was lying and I—and I—"

The tears flowed on unheeded.

"He can't!" she wailed. "Not me! He never could!" And then: "I'm a coward. Just a miserable coward!"

She drooped still more and looked from the portrait to the orchard. Very tenderly she returned the Troubled Goddess to the hiding-place. She let herself out into the paddock and walked slowly to the house. At the back steps she stopped and dropped weakly down. She cupped her chin in her hands and gazed at the large gray lifeless eyes of the studio.

Terry was on the veranda with Mr. Drago; and he had not reached Mr. Drago, he believed, a moment too soon. Mr. Drago was sitting there with the *Sunday Times* spread out on his knees. And he was reading, Terry discovered with acute concern, the shipping news, which would expose one, at least, of Terry's lies—about his arrival from South America. Terry

lost no time and when, half an hour later, Lou emerged from the house Mr. Drago was still discoursing on the merits of his favorite bird. All traces of his animosity toward Terry seemed to have vanished.

GONE was Lady Lou's black of widow's mourning. In its place was a gay and festive pink. Enid came around the corner of the house, wan of color and pinched of eye and mouth, in time to receive the full shock of the impact. Her eyes opened wide and she gasped.

Lady Lou was making a pirouette on the soles of her new suède slippers for the benefit of the two men when Enid came up the steps.

"Why, mamma!" she exclaimed. "When did you go out of mourning?"

Lady Lou stopped smiling, put her hands on her hips, and gave her a look that was anything but friendly.

"Do you want me to go on wearing black forever? I didn't notice *you* wearing it much over a year!"

"Oh, mamma, I didn't mean to be critical; and you look simply lovely. You ought to have warned us. That's all."

She was not thinking of mamma any more at all. After the shock of surprise her thoughts had back-tracked to the problem, the tremendous problem, of Terry Markie and just what she should do about it.

The full responsibility of his future, of his success or failure as a man and as a creative artist, had, it seemed, been thrust upon her. The strong emotion longed for by Virginia Warren had, apparently, been engendered in him; sufficiently so, at all events, for him to take up brush and colors after seven barren years. And if she permitted him to carry on the farce with Lady Lou any further—carry it to its obvious and impending conclusion—his career, in the sensitive stages of its rebirth, would be blasted.

Terry wondered why her expression was so unhappy, why she looked at him now with such tragedy in her eyes. But there were other things on his mind as well. There was, most important of all, Mr. Drago. Mr. Drago seemed more unhappy now than before, if possible, and he was again full of hostility toward Terry. Or had the pink dress upset him?

However, the trip to Lake Mennapog

went off smoothly enough. It was a sleepy, charming little lake covered with lily pads and hemmed in by wild fruit trees. Sprinkled about it were tiny islands. Its surface was as smooth as rubbed gun-metal and flawlessly sustained the fading glory of the sunset and the cool bright disk of the rising moon. Only here and there was the shadow of a ripple, where water-bugs skated.

Lady Lou and Enid made supper preparations in a clearing which all but enclosed a tiny lagoon, and Terry and Mr. Drago attended to the business of chartering two broad and very seaworthy canoes from the farmer.

Several times, while they were paddling back to the little lagoon, Mr. Drago made deep mumbling sounds far back in his oral cavity; each time he cleared his throat, and each time Terry prepared himself for words and sentiments in keeping with the renewed hostility that had taken possession of Mr. Drago's drooping, sad eyes. But no words came; and Terry's discomfort grew.

It continued to grow during a strange, constrained meal. Lady Lou alone seemed unaware that hostility and discomfort freighted the atmosphere; but her gaiety to Terry seemed forced, as if she were determinedly trying to revive a spark now dead. Not once did Enid smile or speak, and only once did she glance at Terry. He had accustomed himself to her habitual glances, which conveyed either a mischievous gaiety or scornful contempt, but now her eyes were black wells of terror. He glanced quickly at Mr. Drago and Mr. Drago once more made those strange rumbling sounds in his throat, like the rumblings of an approaching storm.

It was Lady Lou who finally acknowledged a situation that had become intolerable. She gave a cry shrill enough and loud enough to be classified as a scream.

"I can't stand this any longer!" she said. "What's got into all of you? To look at you any one would think this was a funeral! What are you sulking about, Enid? Percy, what are *you* glowering about?"

"I'm not sulking," Enid said, but with none of her old spirit.

Mr. Drago cleared his throat and the queer rumbling sound, akin to distant thunder, occurred deep in his throat. His face was deathly white. His jaw muscles

bulged. His lips trembled. His aspect was that of a man who was maintaining control of a growing rage only by the most violent exertion of his will. Words finally came.

"I am not glowering," he stated in a shaking voice.

Lady Lou uttered a short wild laugh and addressed herself to Terry.

"Do you know what's the matter with them?"

Terry shook his head.

Lady Lou pushed her table napkin aside and rose with determination.

"Terry, let's go out on the lake. I'm not going to stick around with these kill-joys any longer."

Terry glanced once more at Enid, but she did not look up. He helped Lady Lou into the canoe and arranged cushions behind her. Then, from his seat in the stern, he turned and looked again at Enid.

She and Mr. Drago were hastily assembling plates, napkins, bottles and untouched food. Terry heard Enid's low voice: "Don't let them out of your sight!"

LADY LOU gasped and asked in a whisper: "Terry, what in the world has got into that girl?"

"I give up," Terry sighed, and sent the canoe swimming out of the little lagoon into the lake. "It started when you came down in that pink dress."

"I put it on just for you, Terry. Do you like my little frock?"

"It's ravishing," he declared. "But why has it made them so sore?"

"I don't know and I don't care. We'll forget them. Isn't it a *beautiful* night!"

"Wonderful," Terry muttered.

"Turn to the left, dear; Percy is following you."

Terry applied himself, and presently the canoe slipped into a group of small rush-grown islands. He spied a refuge, and sent the canoe darting into it. It was a tiny natural harbor. Small oak trees grew on the adjacent islands and laced their branches in a canopy overhead.

Lady Lou's eyes were flattering. She assumed a droll expression of listening. The voices of Mr. Drago and Enid sounded behind the little island.

"Do you see them?"

"Not a sign of them!"

"Try that bunch of little islands over there."

The unskilful splashing of Mr. Drago's paddle came from a greater distance; the anxious murmur of voices.

Lady Lou chuckled. "Isn't it exciting! *More* fun!"

TERRY nodded and listened with a wistful grin. He contemplated Lady Lou's hazy face against the background of still, impenetrable water. Mist was rising from the lake in little wisps. The night was purple; the air languorous and fragrant.

"I'm mad about you," Terry sighed.

"Silly boy!"

"I'm going to marry you in the morning!" he said, determinedly.

"You don't want to marry me! You big, silly boy, you know you don't want to marry me! You're just talking!"

"I'm mad about you!" Terry repeated.

"You can't be."

"Will you marry me tomorrow morning, or as soon as it's legally possible?" he interrupted in a slow, stern voice.

The moment had come at last!

"Oh, why did real love come too late!" she cried.

"Late?" Terry echoed.

"Always—everything—is too late!" she panted. "I can't marry you! Oh, I can't! Oh—oh—oh!"

"You said 'too late'?" Terry repeated.

"Yes—too late! That cold fish! That senile old fool! Him!"

"What—what—what!" he cried. "You mean Drago?"

"I hate him! I hate him! I hate him!"

"When did you marry him?" Terry asked.

She wailed: "Three weeks ago!"

The sensations Terry experienced were very similar to the ones he might have enjoyed if he had just emerged safely from a burning building. The word sang like the voices of a heavenly choir in his ears. *Married!*

"Married!" he shouted. "You—you're joking!"

"I wish I was! Oh, don't I wish I was!"

"I'll have to see that marriage certificate before I'll—I'll give up!"

"Well, he carries it in his coat pocket. Oh, I wish I were joking! But you still love me?"

"My dear," Terry said gently and sin-

cerely, "I'll love you to the end of my days!"

The near-by splashing of a paddle interrupted them. Then came the voice of Mr. Drago, a shout.

"Lou! Is that you over there? Where are you, Lou? I want to tell you that that fellow is a liar! He never—"

A scream from Enid interrupted him.

"Terry! Terry! Answer me!"

Terry's voice emerged in a strangling sound. He stared into the blackness but saw nothing. He seized the paddle and pushed the canoe out into the lake. Blackness everywhere—only a faint milky haze on the hilltops.

The next development was a rumbling sound. Then came the rattling of a paddle. A loud splash followed. Next a shout of fright from Mr. Drago. Last, a sputtering.

"She jumped overboard! She tipped the canoe over!" Mr. Drago announced in a voice of woe, a shivering voice.

TERRY was standing with his arms upraised to balance himself. He shouted: "Enid! Where are you?"

From the darkness emerged a faint, gurgling answer.

"Drago! Can you see her?"

"I can't see anything!" Mr. Drago chattered. "And it's over my head. I—I can't touch. I'm hanging onto the b-boat!"

Terry had removed coat and shoes. He dived deep. Lady Lou uttered a shrill scream as the canoe shipped icy water. Terry found weeds and slippery silt at the bottom, and Enid as he came to the surface. The water was paralyzingly cold. Enid was struggling feebly, entangled in her skirt.

Terry seized her by the shoulders and trod water.

He called: "Paddle the boat over here, Lou. Enid's almost unconscious!"

"I can't find the paddle!" Lady Lou wailed. "I'm afraid the boat will sink if I move!"

"Mr. Drago, swim over to her and push that boat over here!"

"I can't swim!" Mr. Drago chattered. "Go ashore and get that farmer."

Just then the moon reappeared and revealed Mr. Drago clinging with both hands to the prow of the overturned canoe, and Lady Lou kneeling in the other, clasping her hands as if in prayer.

"Is she drowned, Terry?"

The moon struck a moist glimmer from Enid's half-closed eyes. Her hands waved feebly about in the water. A broken whisper came from her parted lips:

"Hit my head—going over."

She made a convulsive movement with her arms toward Terry's neck.

"Don't let me go down, Terry!"

TERRY placed discretion before valor and sank away from that dangerous embrace. He came up behind her, grasped a handful of hair, and towed her toward shore. Presently his feet struck soft mud. He dragged her on shore, carried her to the car, and hurried back.

A wail from the night demanded: "Are you going to leave me freezing here?"

Terry swam out to the canoe which contained the shivering bulk of Lady Lou and gave it a push toward Mr. Drago. Mr. Drago transferred trembling hands to the bow and Terry, with quick pushes, sent it to the bank.

Mr. Drago tried to talk, but could only wave his hands about and chatter. He helped Lady Lou, moaning and shivering, to the car and attempted to wrap a laprobe about himself. Terry snatched it from his hands and placed it about Enid, who sat huddled and dripping in the front seat.

The drive home was the longest four-mile trip Terry had ever known. The damp night wind chilled him to the bone. Behind him at intervals he heard the chattering of teeth. Mr. Drago managed, during the drive, to call him a snake once and a skunk twice. It occurred to Terry that he had driven a jealous husband to the verge of murder, and he managed, in spite of his stiffening lips, to grin. Good work, he thought proudly, had been very well done. A secret which would have spoiled the lives of three innocent women had been exposed. He was, however, a little sorry for Lady Lou. In spite of her manifold meannesses, she hardly deserved such a frozen ending for her romance!

Martha, sensing trouble, met the four dripping victims of Lake Mennapog as they came up the veranda steps. She enfolded Enid fiercely in her arms and glared at the three of them as if the girl's condition were the result of a conspiracy.

"She got excited and fell overboard,"

Everybody's Magazine, July, 1924

Terry said. Then, to Mr. Drago and Lady Lou: "Please get into dry clothes and come down to the living-room. We've got some important things to talk over."

"You're damned right, we have!" Mr. Drago agreed angrily.

Martha had kindled a log fire in the living-room against their return, and the room was warm. Mr. Drago hurried to the fire and extended his shaking hands to the flames.

"We'll talk it over right here and now! Lou, sit down here and get warm."

Enid went to stand beside Terry, who was warming his back at the fire.

The warmth thawed Mr. Drago to some extent; and he could now voice his feelings with a little less difficulty. He was still angry; as angry, Terry thought, as one of his white Plymouth Rock hens might have been—if as wet.

"You snake!" he got out between shivers.

"I've heard that enough," Enid said.

"He's a liar!" Mr. Drago added angrily. "He's been stringing you all along—both of you!"

Lady Lou uttered a gasp and looked at Terry.

IN THE tense silence, disturbed only by the hiss and crackle of the burning log, Mr. Drago drew in his quavering breath.

"I don't know what his game is, but I have proof positive that he has been lying! He's a slick, smooth article—"

"Get to the point, Percy," Lady Lou said impatiently.

"I'm getting to it fast enough, my dear! This fellow is up to some deviltry. How much of his story is false I am not in a position to state. Possibly all of it is lies! He told us—you heard him tell us, Lou and Enid—that he came into New York on Friday from South America on a steamer called the *Gracias á Dios*. I am in a position to prove that no such steamer came into New York on Friday or any other day last week! Furthermore, I can prove that there has been no steamer into New York from South America in five days!

"That much of his story I can disprove. And if the one thread is false and rotten, the entire texture must be a fabric of lies!"

Lady Lou had risen several inches from her chair. She uttered a profane word. Then:

"Percy, how long have you known about this?"

"Since this afternoon!" Mr. Drago said triumphantly.

"Well, why didn't you tell me earlier?" she cried.

Mr. Drago looked bewildered. He mumbled something that had to do with "mysterious" and "what your game was."

Lady Lou glared at Enid. "You—you did this!" she cried furiously. "You knew what was going on! You did it between you! You and—and him! You—you fixed it for me to—to—" She halted, her fury having temporarily deprived her of breath. But the blessing was not long withheld.

"After all I've done for you! After the way I wore my fingers to the bone for you for year after year! After the way I tried to be a mother to a motherless little girl—to have you turn on me like this! It's too much! And you—I meant to tell you, all along."

"I don't believe it," said Terry firmly. "I had to pry it out of you with a crowbar."

"Pry what?" Mr. Drago demanded with alarm.

"That they were married three weeks ago, Enid," Terry said to her.

Enid staggered. She rubbed the back of one hand across her forehead.

"She and Mr. Drago?" she gasped.

For a moment Mr. Drago dropped the reins, and his emotions appeared in their true light as the evil, galloping things they really were.

"Oh, you—you idiot!" he cried to his wife. And then he recovered the reins and only his drooping gray eyes betrayed what else he thought of his bride.

"Let me see the marriage certificate," Terry said coldly.

"It isn't true!" Mr. Drago exclaimed. "We—we aren't married! It—it's just a joke. K-keep away from me!" he squealed, as Terry with out-thrust jaw came toward him.

TERRY snapped his fingers. "Give it to me."♦

Mr. Drago hesitated, looked again at the dark, formidable jaw, and hastily delved into an inner pocket. He brought forth a soggy wad of papers. Among them he found the certificate. Terry opened it and Enid read it over his shoulder. It had been

signed nearly a month before by Justice of the Peace Emil Weinmuller, of Ranger-ville, N. J.

"Hang onto it until the estate has been settled," Terry said, passing it to her.

"Let's change our clothes and go," Lady Lou said wearily. "I'm sick of all this."

"Don't hurry," Terry said gently. "We're not quite through. Martha, run up to Mrs. Drago's room and bring down her check-book and fountain pen. You'll find them on her dressing-table." And, when Martha had left the room:

"When your former husband, Mr. Cray, was on his death-bed, a series of mortgages was taken out on this farm. They amounted to twenty-five thousand dollars."

"What business is it of yours?" Lady Lou snapped.

"He's talking for me," Enid said sweetly.

"Well, what about it?" Lady Lou asked a little uneasily. "They aren't my mortgages!"

"Who got the money from them?"

Lady Lou sprang up. "Are you insinuating that I did?"

Terry's grin seemed varnished on his lips. "What became of the money?"

"How should I know?"

She sat down suddenly, and looked frightened.

Martha returned with the check-book and fountain pen, which she gave to Terry. He placed them in Lady Lou's lap. She mechanically unscrewed the cap from the pen and opened the check-book. Then she looked wildly at Mr. Drago, but he only gazed at her stupidly.

"Twenty-five thousand," said Terry. "Is that correct, Enid?"

"Y-yes!" Enid stammered.

"What became of the check I gave you this morning? Why won't that do?"

"I tore it up."

Lady Lou wrote out the check, tore it from the stub, and handed it to Enid.

Enid murmured "Thank you" sweetly.

"Well, you'll probably need most of it to pay off this—this hired heart of yours," Lady Lou remarked bitterly. "Percy, I want to go home!"

"If you hurry," Enid suggested, "you can change into dry things and catch the 10:05 from Norwalk. I'm sure Terry won't mind driving you down. Will you, Terry?"

Except for the monologue maintained by

the car itself, as it leaped from bump to hollow and from hollow to bump, that ride to the South Norwalk station was a silent one.

Terry switched off the ignition when they pulled up beside the station platform, and said quietly to Lady Lou as Mr. Drago helped her to alight:

"I hope there won't be any unpleasantness about that check. As you may have suspected already, I represent one of the most cold-blooded detective agencies in New York—"

"Don't worry about that check!" the lady snapped.

"I hope it won't be necessary," Terry said cheerfully.

She snorted. "I suppose you think you're mighty smart!"

"Lady Lou," he gently replied, "all is for the best, in this best of all possible worlds. After you have given the matter more thought, I am sure you will agree that we have all acted for the greatest good of the greatest number."

"Hmph! I suppose you think I had a real crush on you—you conceited dummy!" It was delivered with Lady Lou's familiar sarcastic manner, but there was something like a gleam of desperation in her eyes, and it took Terry only a moment to remember that she had a future with the jealous Mr. Drago to consider.

Mr. Drago's drooping, melancholy eyes seemed to grow more melancholy as he waited for Terry's reply. Possibly it meant a great deal to Mr. Drago.

"Lady Lou," Terry said earnestly, "I knew you were making a fool of me right along and I'm glad I'm man enough to admit it! Now I know that you were just trying to find out what my game was!"

"You tripped me up just before I did!" she said breathlessly.

And Mr. Drago put in contemptuously, but with a visible air of relief: "Shake!"

It was a memory of faded blue middle-aged eyes warmly grateful that Terry carried back to the house with him. Enid's voice from the living-room greeted him.

"Is that you, Terry?"

WHEN he went into the living-room Enid was kneeling before the fireplace, shaking out her long hair to the warmth. He could see only the white

line of her chin through it. It fell to the rug at her knees, and its luster caught sparks and bright ribbons from the glowing log.

Terry dropped his hands to a chair-back and looked down at her with firmly compressed lips.

She had changed to a dark dress of heavy jersey cloth.

He cleared his throat.

"Enid?"

"Yes, Terry?"—muffled.

"There's one thing I want to clear up before I clear out. Some day I—I may be dropping in here again: and I want you to understand that I am not the kind of a man who would marry any woman for her money. When I said that this morning—"

Enid jumped up, pushing the hair back over her shoulders. Her mouth was full of hair-pins. As she stared at him with round dark eyes her hands, for a moment, remained at her shoulders.

"Terry Markie," she said through the hair-pins, "you just make me tired! Do you suppose I'm deaf, dumb and blind?"

"Well—"

"Give me credit for a little sense!"

She turned to an oval mahogany mirror over the mantel and began methodically to put her hair up, deftly pushing hair-pins into place.

"Where are you going?" she asked presently, not glancing at him.

Terry did not reply to that question promptly. His interest had been captured by a small, unframed water-color that had been very recently placed beside the oval mirror. The Troubled Goddess frowned and smiled at his bewilderment.

"I don't know," he said.

"You don't have to go yet, do you? Won't you sit down and talk—just a minute?"

Terry sat down with an air of reluctance and stretched out his fingers to the fire. A slight delay, he realized, might bring certain resolves crashing down, but he wanted to look at her a moment longer. It might be a very long time.

Enid had done with her hair. She drew a chair up beside his and sat down in it with her hands in her lap.

"I see you've noticed that little water-color of me. Isn't it lovely? I found it out in mother's studio a little while ago."

"Oh!" Terry said.

"The man who did that used to have more promise as a portrait painter than any other man in America. He took prizes at all the exhibitions. Even Sargent was raving about his work. This is the first picture he's done in seven years, I think."

Terry stared at the crumbling backlog. Enid stole a glance at his profile. It was dark and moody, almost Mephistophelian. She turned her body with a sharp intake of breath.

"Terry Markie!"

He looked up.

"Do you know why I yelled at you to-night and tipped the canoe over?"

Terry nodded. "Yes. You got cold feet."

She pouted her lips. "You're being just as unresponsive as you know how! Why did you paint that picture of me?"

"The subject appealed to me," Terry said. "The lighting was unusual, the composition was good, and there was a curious contrast made by the green background."

Enid leaned toward him. "Did you paint anything between the time you saw the Primavera and this?"

"No," he said.

"Then you're going to go on with your work?"

"I don't know."

"But you must, Terry! You mustn't stop again. Why don't you use mother's studio? You won't be bothered by a soul. You can just work, and—and—"

She stopped, warmed by the rising tide of color in his face.

"Are you one of these selfish creatures who won't let people show their gratitude?" she cried. "I haven't said a word about the five thousand you were to have for—for getting Lady Lou off our hands—"

"No," said Terry.

"And I won't mention it again!" she added hastily. "Terry, look me in the eye. Do you believe in the modern ideas of equality between men and women?"

"No," said Terry. "Women mix too much sentiment with business."

"Yes," she agreed dryly. "I think I've heard you say that before. Now, suppose I were a man. Suppose I were a man and owned this house and land and—the studio. And suppose I was very much interested in art, as a layman, and saw the chance of being useful in a small way to the world of art by offering you the use of my studio, and

yet made it strictly a business arrangement. You were to use the studio and—and board here. And when you had given an exhibition and sold some of your paintings, we agreed that you were to—to pay fairly for your board and the rent of the studio. Would you consider such a proposition if I were a man?"

"**B**UT you're not a man," Terry replied with relentless logic.

"I want to know if you would, if I *were* a man!"

"I don't know," he said absently. "I might."

"Well—will you, Terry?"

"No," said Terry firmly, "I will not."

She bit her lip and hung her head. Her pride had already been overreached; yet Virginia Warren had warned her that stern measures would be required with Terence Markie. She looked up determinedly.

"Terry, I want to know if you painted that water-color of me because you'd fallen in love with me."

"No," Terry said grimly.

"Then why did you do it?"

He started to rise. "I think I'll—"

"Sit still!" she cried. "Why did you paint that water-color? Why did you wait for seven years to pick up a brush?"

"I—" Terry began.

"Terry Markie!" she cried. "You're a big liar! You told me this morning you loved me!"

He had nothing to say.

There were tears in her eyes. "You meant it! You said, 'I'm going through with this horrible farce solely and simply because I'm so damnably in love with you that I'd wring her greedy, fat, selfish neck if it would help you!'"

"Didn't you mean that? Terry, don't you dare leave this room! It's just your terrible false pride! You think it's noble and heroic to go sneaking off tonight and—and leave me here! It isn't noble or heroic at all. You're simply going to spoil both our lives. You know in your heart you want to stay here. You—do—too—love me!"

Terry glared at the fire and said nothing.

"If it weren't for your pride, you'd be at work in that studio tomorrow morning! You've got a lot of silly, mid-Victorian ideas about girls with money marrying men with

none. I suppose you think I really meant what I said at the station yesterday—about not intending to marry a struggling artist, or a bright young man with a future, or—or a beloved vagabond. I haven't any false pride! I'll marry all three of you!"

Terry lifted up his head and grinned.

"Enid, it's nearly two o'clock. I'm going to New York."

She gasped indignantly. "Terry Markie, you—you just make me furious! You are not going to leave this house without my permission. Now, come out into the kitchen with me while I make you some coffee."

TERRY followed her into the kitchen with a firm tread. He had kept his resolves, thank God! And he would continue to keep them. When it came to the question of love—love in any of its bewildering forms and labyrinthine approaches—a man was putty in the hands of a woman—*generally!* But not he! He wasn't weakening, and he wouldn't weaken. If he wanted to take her into his arms and hold her tight and kiss her, it was merely an added compliment to the steadiness of his self-control that he refrained from doing so!

In the darkness, before she found the electric-light bulb, he heard what closely resembled a choked sob. Just another trick from a bag full of them!

"You're good at starting fires," Enid snapped. "Let me see you perform on that kerosene stove! I'm going to fry some eggs and bacon and make some toast. We'll need three burners."

A voice said to Terry: "Go! Go! While you can!"

"I guess I can take care of myself," Terry silently retorted.

Enid went into the pantry for coffee pot and coffee, bacon and eggs, bread and butter.

"Bring me the little black frying-pan from under that shelf," she commanded, in a furious little voice.

"Yes, miss," Terry said meekly.

"I'm mad, and don't you think I'm not, Terry Markie!"

She busied herself at the stove; dropped slices of bacon into the pan; let them sizzle and melt; broke eggs and dumped them in.

"I'd even help you clean out the studio—wash the window myself. It's a beautiful studio!"

"Enid," he pleaded, "you're not making it very easy for me."

She whirled about. Her cheeks were fiery, and her blue eyes blazed.

"Easy for you!" she gasped. "I'm doing everything I know of in God's green world to save you from yourself! I thought I had a little pride. I've thrown it away—down to the last shred! Easy for you! I tell you I love you and—and you laugh in my face!"

"May I be drawn and quartered if I did!"

"Well, you sneered!"

"You little spitfire, I'm nearer crying than smiling. *You* know it's useless."

He went over to her until his elbow touched hers, and looked down soberly into her flushed, upturned face. He said wistfully:

"Can't I go away like the little boy in the story and come back to you when I've made good?"

For a little longer Enid looked up at him. Then her eyes filled with tears. She brushed them away fiercely with the back of one hand. She stamped her foot.

"I hate you!" she cried. "I hate you, Terry Markie! You're stupid! You're just stupid!"

She pushed him roughly aside as she reached for the plates, upon which she deftly decanted the bacon and eggs. She carried the plates to the table and Terry followed humbly with toast and the pot of coffee. Enid sat down and munched toast balefully. She asked abruptly:

"What are your plans?"

"I'm going to work."

"Glory be! Doing what?"

"Some advertising agency may take me on."

"My Lord! You in an advertising agency!"

"It's the quickest way to earn a lot of money in a hurry I know of. They were after me before."

"Well, I should imagine they would have been. And you turned them down!"

"Yes, I—"

"Why?" she snapped.

"Well, at that time I—"

"I'll tell you why," Enid interrupted, spilling cream accurately from a small pitcher into his coffee. "At that time you turned them down because you were an artist. You turned them down because

advertising-agency work ruins a man of your temperament! That's why. What will they do to you now? They'll have you drawing pretty girls, the insipid kind, and languid thin men drooping around drawing-rooms and entitled: 'Prince Tut Garters—ninety-nine and ninety-seven hundredths per cent pure!'

"I'll just tell you this, Terry Markie. If you go to work for any advertising agency, you needn't come back to me. I'm not interested in you in the least as a money-maker. You're a genius, and I—"

Terry had gulped his coffee and risen. Enid finished hers and stood up, too.

"Are you going now?"

"Yes, Enid."

"You're the biggest idiot I ever knew in my life, Terry Markie! Wait a minute—you'll do that?" And she ran upstairs.

Terry waited. He lighted a cigarette and waited. He finished the cigarette and started another—and waited. When fifteen or twenty minutes had elapsed Enid returned. She wore over her dress a dark blue coat, at her neck a black fox fur piece, and on her head a small dark hat that partly concealed one eye. With the other she regarded him defiantly. And over one arm she carried a man's tan spring overcoat.

"I'm ready," she said briskly. "Put this coat on. It's an old one of Ted's, and it was going to the rag-man anyway."

"If you think you are going to New York with me," Terry said firmly, "you are very much mistaken."

Enid opened the kitchen door. "We haven't much time to lose, dear. It's nearly half-past three, and there won't be many cops around. Where do we go in New York?"

"You're—not—going—to—New York!"

Enid went out into the yard. For a moment the kitchen light shone on the bobbing dark hat. She was progressing rapidly toward the barn. Terry glanced at the tan overcoat draped over his arm, and hastened after her.

A roar from the flivver greeted him as he gained the barn door. The horn shrieked. The car darted past him to the driveway. The headlights blinked on full in his eyes. The horn shrieked again.

"Coming?" she shouted. "Or must I go alone?"

Terry leaped to the running-board and forcibly removed her hands from the wheel.

"Get out of this car!" he ordered roughly.

Enid slid over to the other side of the seat.

"The only way you can get me out of here, Terry Markie, is to hit me with a club!"

"I'll sit here until you get out," Terry threatened.

"I have loads of endurance."

"I'll sit here all night!"

"Won't that be nice!"

"You stubborn little devil!"

ENID settled herself comfortably and waited. Then, looking him full in the eyes:

"Nice night, isn't it? I see the moon's set."

"Enid!"

"Yes, Terry?"

"Are you going to get out of this car?"

"Nope."

Terry lost his temper. He seized her by the shoulders and shook her. Then he wrapped his arms around her and attempted to drag her through the doorway. Her mouth dropped to his hand. A sharp pain leaped upward through his wrist.

"Stop that!" He released her.

Enid settled back into her corner, grinning.

"Is it bleeding?" she inquired solicitously.

Terry's answer was to start the car and—to turn it, and drive back into the barn.

"Oh, Terry, *won't* you give in?"

"A year or two from now—" Terry began huskily.

Enid had dropped her head to his shoulder with a weary sigh, surrendering at last to his stubborn will. The next moment Terry was aware that he held a girl in his arms fiercely; the tears were filling his eyes so rapidly that he could hardly see the tears in hers; but that she was smiling. And then, in the manner of a miracle, his hot, hungry lips found her sweet cool ones. And something that had frozen solid in him seven years ago seemed to thaw and melt and then to glow with a warm, inspiring radiance. . . .

THE END

The Strange Dawg

*"There's Just One Thing I Regret," Said Slocum,
"and That Is That He Can't Tell Me of His
Past. What a Past He Must Have Had!"*

By Roderick W. Siler

THAT a dog should be referred to as the dawg is not my fault, but that of the beast's owner, Slocum.

The name dawg is not necessarily a mark of disrespect. Certainly it was not so in Slocum's mouth when applied to his own animal. I am under the impression that it comes from the South, where they rather linger on words they like, and where the canine race is highly esteemed because of its ability in the pursuit of game, particularly of the succulent possum. Yet Slocum, as far as I know, was never in the South. He mispronounces no other words of the language—if dawg is a mispronunciation—but from the entrance of the animal into his life he has never called it other than by this Ozarkian synonym for dog.

When first I saw the animal it had not been long in Slocum's possession. I came into Slocum's apartments, found the beast under his chair, and Slocum smoking and wondering just what he should do next. When I entered, the dog rose, not through courtesy, nor for that matter through ill will; but out of a loutish curiosity, as indicated by sniffing about my calves.

"What is it?" I inquired.

"Last night," recited Slocum, "I was awakened by a most tremendous uproar. I waked up dreaming I was in an earthquake, and the falling of houses, the shrieking of women and the bellows of men were in my ears. As I became clearer I realized that though the house and the world remained intact, the clamor was indubitable and worthy of a catastrophe. I thought possibly there might be a fire. I went to the window, but there was no sign

of fire excepting the lights of the town; though they, I noticed, flickered most when the noise rose to its highest. It dawned on me there might be a circus in town; that the menagerie was loose, or longed to get loose. At last, because of a certain continuity and familiarity in the blast, I realized that it was projected by a single dog, but a dog with a voice like the exhaust of Vesuvius. I hardly knew what to do."

"You wanted to kill him," I suggested.

"I wanted to go back to bed. But that would have done no good, for with such a rumpus outdoors I could not have slept. So I slipped on some clothes and went out to investigate. There is a vacant lot in this block east of here. That lot I found to be the center of disturbance."

At this point in Slocum's story I looked at the dog, which had returned to him and was lying beside his chair. I was struck, at this second observation, less by the animal's lack of pulchritude, which had impressed me at first, than by the look of intelligence with which he now watched Slocum.

"**A**YE, he's no fool; he knows what I'm saying," Slocum now informed me solemnly and positively. "When I first saw him out there in the middle of that lot booming away for all he was worth it struck me as the strangest thing ever I saw. Two o'clock in the morning it was; not a man nor a cat in sight, not a sign of the moon; yet there he was, feet braced apart, hair standing up on his back, and him cursing and defying something which for the life of me I couldn't see. I tell you it was uncanny."

Not to be taken in by any such hocus-pocus, I felt now like making a facetious remark; but it happened that at that instant the animal was looking very fixedly at me.

"I called to him," continued Slocum, "and asked him what the devil he meant by kicking up such a fuss when people were trying to sleep. At that he stopped, looked me over, and then without any hesitation came over to me. I patted his head. He accepted it in that manner of his which, you'll notice, without being surly isn't overly friendly. I started for home, he at my heels. This morning, when I left for business, I let him out, hardly expecting to see him again. But the housekeeper tells me he spent the day around the place, and here he was at the door when I came home."

I now took the opportunity to examine the animal with more interest, as well as with more respect. As I have said before, he was no beauty. Slocum may say what he likes, but this dog was of no distinct breed, and a dog fancier, I imagine, could have made out half a dozen strains in him. The extremes of him were perhaps definable. He had the tail of a collie. The head end ran most to Airedale, for he had a rather square face and that bewhiskered, unshaved appearance peculiar to Airedales among dogs and to tramps and philosophers among men.

His intermediate part was rough-coated and of bulk sufficient to make him a good-sized animal; but he gave no indication of overfeeding. He produced the impression of having seen much service, not because he was scarred by battle, but because he had such a worldly-wise look about him. He lay now with his head upon his paws, his eyes half shut, unworried about us or his next meal, yet observant; the perfect attitude of a philosopher—or tramp.

"Did you ever see such assurance?" Slocum asked.

"He's a cool one," I admitted.

"He shall have a home here if he wants it," Slocum now informed me. "But I fear he will leave me. Something tells me that he is a wanderer; one who has seen much of the world; one who will not be willing to settle down to respectability."

ON THE second evening after this I again saw Slocum and his animal—now for the first time to be dubbed the dawg. Slocum had a cheerful fire burning

in his quarters, and the dawg was cocked before it as comfortably as if he had been brought up before a grate, surrounded by other bachelor extravagances. He allowed his gaze to wander from the fire to me for an instant, and that was all the attention I received.

"He recognizes you," said Slocum triumphantly.

"He's still here, I see," I remarked, perhaps a bit sarcastically.

While I shed my coat Slocum waited. This animal of his had become too important to be talked of casually. When I was seated, completely collected and attentive, Slocum said:

"He's a wonderful dawg!"

"Yes?"

"A dawg of human intelligence!"

"How so?"

When Slocum spoke again he did so impressively.

"It may sound foolish to you," he continued, "but I want to tell you that in two days this dawg has grown on me. Never have I seen an animal with such intelligence as his, and I have seen a lot of men with less. He knows when to show up for meals, and all the things of that kind a sensible dawg should know. That isn't what impresses me most. It's his manner that astonishes me. He's as knowing as a sphinx, and as hard to get any information out of!"

"Remarkable!" I admitted.

"And moreover," continued Slocum leaning toward me, "that dawg sees things. Two nights now I've waked up to find him standing in the middle of the floor, growling low, with his neck up, and fierce as a devil!"

I was about to greet this also with "Remarkable!" when the dog turned his look on me with such understanding that I asked:

"What name are you going to give him?"

"Name!" exclaimed Slocum. "Can you imagine that dawg answering to a name; to Rover, or Fly—or even to Hector?"

"Well, I suppose you'll teach a dog as intelligent as he is some tricks," I suggested.

"Tricks!" retorted Slocum. "If Socrates were on earth among men would he be doing tricks? This dawg is great among his kind; too great to be a trick dawg!"

As a last venture I inquired, "Is he

always as amiable as he is before that fire?"

"I think not," replied Slocum, now speaking more slowly. "Since being here he has been as you see him now. Excepting once. That was when I suggested a bath for him. Then I think there would have been serious trouble if I had insisted."

"That's the tramp in him," I suggested.

"Rather it's the philosopher, the thinker," objected Slocum. "He has no time for such trifles."

THERE could be no doubt that the dawg had conquered Slocum, and that for the remainder of his life he was assured a resting place before the grate—unless he returned to that mysterious career which had preceded his early-morning assault upon Slocum's sleep. Certainly he had a manner: one which gave the impression that he was the most knowing of all the several dog breeds culminating in him, and that he liked Slocum, not because Slocum had a grate and such good viands, but because Slocum appealed to his judgment as a superior dog.

"Confound it," said Slocum to me this very evening, "that dawg and I were made for each other. There's mutual respect. He's no handsome looker; but neither was Aristotle, I'll venture. I can see beneath that rough hide of his. And he'd like me if I were a tramp."

"Probably like you better," I agreed.

"There's just one thing I regret," continued Slocum; "and that is that he can't tell me of his past. What a past he must have had! Where did he acquire all this wisdom? What makes him see spooks?"

Did the dog hear these remarks? Did he understand and resent the remark about his appearance? He was a wise brute; he had an uncanny way of watching a speaker. Though he might appear indifferent to gossip, was he as sensitive to it as a blue-ribbon winner?

Anyhow, two days later when I called on Slocum the dog was gone.

"He's gone—completely!" was Slocum's greeting as I entered.

"Gone where?"

"Where! Do you think I wouldn't have him back if I knew where!"

I waited for my friend to recover himself.

"I suspected last evening, before bedtime, that something was up," he said at

last. "The dawg was restless, prowling between the grate and the door, and not his usual sensible self at all. Last night he was seeing things again. In fact he almost had me seeing 'em. I thought of locking him up when I left here this morning. But I knew it wouldn't do any good with a dawg like that. And when I got back he was gone."

"And never so much as a word of thanks, eh?" said I; for whereas the peculiarities of the spook-seeing wanderer had won Slocum they had left me a bit suspicious and antagonistic.

"He'll be back, though," concluded Slocum. "He and I understand each other. He likes me." Afterward he added with a sigh:

"But he won't stay after he's back. He can't help it. He's an example of reincarnation. He's got me believing in it. He's leading some sort of a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde existence. He's got another home than this, and it's not so respectable, either. He wants to be respectable and can't. Thus his growling at night. It's spiritual. And I'm going to help him if I can. When he shows signs of going back to this other life I'm going to get ready. When he starts I'll be on his heels."

So little did I expect to see Slocum's prophecy fulfilled that I recklessly said:

"When you go I'll go with you, both as witness and as protection."

THEREFORE, when a week later I came to Slocum's, it was with something of a start that I saw reclining before the fireplace him of the dual nature, the dog. He turned his eyes toward me as I entered, and as he neither growled nor wagged his tail I took it as one of his calm recognitions.

"You remember I told you he'd be back," Slocum said joyfully.

I admitted the truth of it.

"You remember I told you something more, too," he added; and having glanced in the direction of the dog he then winked stealthily at me. He wished to remind me that he had also prophesied that the dog would leave again. But Slocum did not intend that the surprising canine should overhear any plans for following him to his other life.

Indeed from this time on Slocum was very careful of what was said when the dog was in the neighborhood. Since the visitor's

stay with Slocum this time was to be considerably longer than on his first coming, the fact that Slocum made no remarks offensive to a dog's feelings may have been responsible. According to Slocum the visitor was no less interesting on his second coming than on his first. He wore the same philosophical, yet impenetrable, countenance. He saw bogies at night, and had Slocum half seeing the same. He caused Slocum to take more oaths that he (Slocum) would discover whether conscience or indigestion was responsible for this night walking.

Two weeks after the dog's second appearance he was ready for his second departure, as Slocum informed me over the phone. It was about ten o'clock at night, and at the moment I was more intent on going to bed than on chasing conscience-stricken canines.

"This is Slocum," he informed me when I answered the phone. "Are you ready?"

"Ready for what?" I inquired.

"If you don't understand I can't explain," he replied in a hoarse whisper intended to circumvent any listeners, canine or otherwise. "And I can't wait more than half an hour for you."

With that he hung up the phone.

In half an hour I was at his home. I had given him my word to come. Moreover, I had to admit I was not indifferent to some of the peculiar features of the case. Slocum admitted me, and I found him dressed to resemble something between a burglar and a very poor relation. I suppose my appearance was similar, since he seemed satisfied with it.

In the room where burned the grate was the dog. But the dog was changed. Instead of reclining before the grate with that composure which had so often won our admiration he paced about the room in a nervous and unpleasant manner. Without turning his head he glanced at us out of the corners of his eyes, and there seemed about him a tendency to show his teeth. Had it been any dog other than this one I should have thought of fits.

"**H**E'S mighty restless," whispered Slocum. "I think he would have taken a nip at me for keeping him here, but he's wise enough to realize that that wouldn't open the door. Let's be going."

With that Slocum made clear the way to the street. The dog sprang out, and Slocum and I after him.

This moment, as the dog ran down the street and Slocum and I double-quickened on his trail, was to my friend an anxious one. Could two men, in none too good condition for foot racing, keep up with a lean and agitated dog? Would the dog, resenting our pursuit, come to a dead stop, or else put on a speed impossible to us?

It was the dog, himself, who solved the problem in a way both to astonish and delight us. He turned his head and saw us coming. Instead of streaking off he slowed down, and continued at such a pace that we could keep in sight. At the dog's encouragement to us I, for the first time, began to take something of Slocum's personal interest in the affair.

The pursuit led us to a shabby quarter of the town, and Slocum's speculations on dual natures came to my mind. The streets were gas-lit here, the houses ramshackle, and the district seemed given to late hours. Corner buildings were always alight and awake, and for the most part served as drinking places. The dog showed no hesitation on his journey, while Slocum and I, dressed as denizens of the deeps, felt more comfortable than we might have otherwise.

The dog stopped at last at a certain corner building, on the first floor of which drinks were to be had, as was plainly advertised without. He seemed to pay no attention to Slocum and me, and yet I am sure he was furtively aware of our approach. The point he plainly made was that he and we were no longer acquainted. Slocum nudged me. This was Hyde's den.

Slocum opened the door, and the dog slid in; and I give him credit for showing just enough hesitation to prove that Hyde still had trouble with Jekyll.

Slocum and I followed. We were in a drinking place, none too remarkable for cleanliness. There were tables, some occupied by gentry whose appearance was no better than their surroundings. There was a bar, supported by other gentry, on the other side of which moved the most impressive figure in the room.

He was large, unattractive, with a thick neck, a thick crooked nose, and a thick voice. To judge from some of the patrons

opposite him, he doled out questionable liquor, although he himself was quite sober at the moment. He was busy when the dog entered, yet not so busy but that he noted the newcomer with something of a stare, and growled: "So you're back, eh?"

There was no friendliness, no welcome in it. And Slocum and I observed that the dog moving, half defiant, half fearful, to a familiar place across the room, expected nothing else. Crouched in a far corner the dog had eyes only for the man behind the bar.

IN DUE time a thick finger wigwagged Slocum and me, and the thick voice inquired: "What'll it be, gents?"

We ordered. The dispenser of drinks brought the glasses to us. That done, he stood a moment beside us, his fists on his hips and his apron half slung behind him, and again stared without favor at the dog in the corner. Making no comment, however, he returned to his chief business of the evening.

In the interim which followed, Slocum and I, I venture, were concerned with much the same thoughts. What, we wondered, could bring so intelligent a dog from before a blazing grate on a chill night to such a place as this, where there was neither warmth of fire nor welcome?

As the time passed the company thinned out, and business languished for the bartender. At last he came around the end of the bar and again stood beside us. Again he stared at the far corner.

"That dog is sure a queer one!" said he finally.

Now it was less his calling the animal in the corner queer than "that dog" which struck both Slocum and me with something of a shock. However little yonder beast was appreciated by this thick-headed barkeeper, the latter realized that no pet appellation was fitting in this case.

"That dog," continued the thick one, "has me guessin'. He'll hang around here for a week or two, then he'll be gone for a week or two, and where he's been is more than I can tell. He comes back lookin' fat and well kept, as often as not, and I can't understand why he comes back at all. For he's no great pet around here."

"Don't he belong to you?" inquired Slocum.

"Not to me," replied the bartender. "He's had two owners that I know of. Slim Dawson was the first. Slim was in politics in this ward. Slim always had a dog, and this one used to follow him around here when he was a pup. Then some one put a couple of shots in Slim's back out in front of this place one night. The dog hung round here after Slim was buried. Then he took to followin' Red Haley; and that was queer, because some people said it was Red who croaked Slim, though the coppers couldn't prove it. Red didn't like the dog much, and he liked the dog less when he found he used to lay round the police station for two or three days at a time. And when the coppers killed Haley, after he'd pulled a little job out of town, some people said it was the dog who led the coppers to him."

The speaker and the dog, I noted, eyed each other until Slocum asked: "Are you going to keep him?"

The bartender turned to us and, more positively than might have been expected, replied: "I can use him for a watchdog around here nights after I close up. I like a trick dog, myself, or a fightin' dog, but this dog ain't neither. Slim saw some good in him, I guess, so for old times' sake I'll let him stick around."

This charitable intention was somewhat obscured by the speaker's concluding words to us as he returned to the bar:

"But if that dog leaves here again for one of his long visits it won't be healthy for him if he comes back."

This might or might not mean much, for to tell the truth this place had at no time impressed Slocum and me as a health resort, not even for dogs, who were not called upon to imbibe its liquors. In the circumstances, however, Slocum and I kept this to ourselves. Indeed, we went soon afterward, and the dog gave not the slightest recognition of our departure.

SEVERAL days passed before I saw Slocum again, and then of course the dog came in for his share of attention. In fact, Slocum had begun before I was well within the door.

"That dawg isn't back," he informed me, though I could have told that from his long face.

"No news, eh?" said I.

"Yes!" he answered, dramatically.

He paused, for emphasis, then continued:

"I have spent some hours, since last seeing you, in looking through old newspaper files. That bartender gave me a clue. That gentleman's name is Vroman; and furthermore, both he and Haley, at the time of Dawson's death, were suspected of killing the latter after a quarrel at Vroman's place."

Before I was recovered from this surprising information Slocum said, even more impressively:

"So much for newspaper and police knowledge. The dawg could tell more if he could speak. The dawg *knows* Vroman and Haley killed Dawson. I haven't any doubt he led the police to put an end to Haley. I haven't any doubt he hopes to do as much for Vroman. That dawg has a soul, I tell you, and in his soul is a mixture of love for an old master, hatred of Vroman, and the promptings of inherited instincts as well as of unusual animal intelligence."

"But," I objected, "why doesn't Vroman kill the dog if these things are true?"

"He will kill him, sooner or later, if we let him!" cried Slocum. "It's a matter of psychology. Vroman dislikes the dawg, but his curiosity is also aroused. He sometimes is inclined to kill the dawg, but a touch of superstitious fear holds his hand. But he'll kill some time when he's drunk. He's known as a bad man when he gets on his periodical sprees. He was drunk the night Dawson was killed. If the dawg is not back here before long I'll go and get him."

Without inquiring too closely into the particulars of how this feat was to be accomplished, I signified by a nod my intention of giving any needed help.

IN DUE time, the further absence of the dog being insupportable to my friend, he and I advanced upon the house of Vroman, properly garbed and determined, but none too clear as to just how we were to proceed. For Vroman was not the easiest man in the world to overcome. But worse than Vroman might be the dog if the dog had not as yet felt the urge toward Slocum's grate again. Our obstacles were more evident than were means of removing them.

We entered Vroman's place with brave hearts, however. The first sight within was enough to try them.

Back of the bar was not Vroman, but a smaller, less important, less imposing individual; a deputy, we were to learn, while Vroman temporarily relaxed. For sitting at a table was Vroman, dressed in fashion, though somewhat soiled by the adventures of the last twenty-four hours, and more than half drunk. Vroman was plainly on one of his famous periodicals.

The next moment Slocum and I both looked for the dog. We found him in the corner. But he was changed. His portion had been abuse, and plenty of it, since last we saw him. He showed signs of famine, and of having been beaten more than once. He was gaunt, and no doubt nervous and somewhat fearful; and yet he did not cringe. That he had not fled such treatment, cured of inherited predilections or desire for revenge or whatever it was that had brought him here, was because he was tied by a heavy rope.

Slocum and I next eyed each other. How I looked I cannot say, but Slocum never appeared more unpleasant.

"I'm going to get the dawg out of here tonight!" he told me between clenched teeth.

By observing the thick Vroman I could see that this was a thing far more easily said than done. Yet I nodded to my friend that I would second him.

Vroman did not see us, and would not have recognized us if he had. Thus we moved to a table near the dog, feeling the wind of Vroman's speech and waving arms as he explained to comrades how with his right fist he had already exterminated two men that day. Seeing Vroman's bloodshot, drunken eyes and his brutal face, we could not doubt there was murder about the man.

THE dog recognized us. Less by his face than by the other end of him were we informed of this. Warily, yet regularly, his tail moved in horizontal sweeps over the dirty floor. Slocum, I am sure, could hardly keep from falling on the dog's neck.

With such an impulsive man as Slocum it was not long before the rescue was under way. At a moment when Vroman's profane declarations that he had still another person to fix that night held the respectful attention of every one else in the house Slocum reached over and with his pocket knife cut the rope which held the dog.

Here was a tense moment, with Vroman threatening violence ten feet away; and Slocum and I realized it no more clearly than did the dog. Only when Slocum pointed to the door would the dog move in that direction. This he now did so stealthily that it began to look as if he would get out of the place, and we after him, without the roaring Vroman being the wiser. But as the devil would have it Vroman's glance swept our way. He saw the dog, not unlike a beast of prey, slinking across the room, and his voice ceased and his jaw dropped, perhaps with astonishment, perhaps with a touch of fear. He saw us next. Then the storm broke.

He came toward us, and in such a fury that Slocum and I rose to our feet.

"Who let that dog loose?" he roared.

"I did!" replied Slocum. "I'll not stand by and see you mistreat him!"

Had Vroman come with his fists Slocum and I would have met him with resolution if not with pleasure, for he was between us and the door. But Vroman was a murderer at heart rather than a fighter. He pulled a pistol out of his pocket. He aimed at Slocum, and I thought my friend was as good as a dead man.

But the dog interfered. Through the air hurtled a body toward Vroman, and the next instant struck that stout gentleman full in the chest. The shock of the dog's charge was so sudden and complete that Vroman's pistol was knocked from his hand and he, himself, was upset. The dog came to ground again with a considerable portion of Vroman's coat between his teeth; and not being satisfied with that he made a second rush at his enemy.

I now shoved Slocum toward the door, despite his protests.

"He'll kill the dawg!" cried Slocum.

"Let us find a policeman!" I insisted; and managed to get my friend outside and started down the street.

When we were a half a block away we heard two shots, and Slocum groaned. At the next corner we met two policemen coming hurriedly toward the firing.

"Vroman's trying to kill some one!" I shouted.

The mention of Vroman's name was followed by a grim look about the police, which I noted with satisfaction. The four of us went running back.

At the door we found Vroman's patrons, this time outside, and plainly awaiting further eventualities.

"VROMAN'S gone!" a voice from the crowd informed the policemen.

"What was he shooting at?" asked one of the latter.

"He was shootin' at a dog. But," the voice added with significant emphasis, "he's goin' to shoot a man or two tonight before he's through."

"Where did he go?" was the next question.

But to this there was no reply; and that was significant, too.

"Where's the dawg?" then cried Slocum.

"The dog was hit," came the answer.

"But at that he got out alive."

The police, followed by Slocum and me, entered. The room was empty of men, but not of evidence of what had taken place. An overturned table there was, and chairs hastily pushed back. Some spots of blood made tracks to the door. Slocum found the remnant of Vroman's coat.

The police then consulted as to where next to look. They were puzzled. It was beyond Slocum and me to tell where such a man as Vroman might be expected to retire, and the crowd outside dared not tell if it could. One of the police was moving toward the telephone when a stir at the door stopped him. Amid applause or curses—it would be hard to say which—there entered none other than the dog.

He came straight for us. There was blood on his shoulder, and he limped; yet he was eager and intelligent.

"There's that dog, Mike!" cried a policeman with a voice that sent a thrill up my spine. "That's the dog that took us to Haley!"

"And he'll take you to Vroman if you'll let him!" burst out Slocum.

"Is he your dog?"

"Yes!" answered Slocum boldly.

"We'll follow him if he knows the way."

"Get him!" shouted Slocum to the dog, and pointed to the door.

The dog scrambled for the street with the greatest show of joy that ever I saw about him. After him followed the two policemen; then Slocum, I, and the crowd at the door when we got outside.

We ran to the next street crossing, passed

that and came to an alley. Up this rushed the dog, and it was here, I noted, that the police saw fit to draw their revolvers. Half-way up the alley the dog turned into a narrow passageway, and the police, while continuing, ordered all others to remain where they were.

It seemed a long wait, though probably no more than a minute or two. A rattle of revolver shots, six or eight of them, gave us some idea of what was happening. Vroman, attempting an ambush, had been caught in his own trap. In the rear room of a house which he had apparently fitted up to repel just such usurpations of the law as this he was, by the police revolvers, promptly and properly extinguished.

The dog, unhurt except for a bullet

graze on his shoulder, went to Slocum, with whom he has since remained. Granting that Slocum may go too far in his talk of reincarnation, animals with souls, and so on, the fact remains that the dog is a strange beast. Slocum found him howling mournfully over Vroman's dead body. Why did he do that? Certainly he was not sad. Vroman dead, he wanders no more from Slocum's fireside. What have become of the inherited instincts? He still sees things at night, Slocum says. What does he see? He is known only as "that dog of Slocum's." The most intelligent beast imaginable, he will tolerate no lessons in bathing or standing on his hind legs. Between Slocum and the dog there is perfect understanding. But I admit he is too deep for me.

Coming in August

Besides the complete novel "The Accusing Silence," announced on page 38, here will be

Seven Short Stories

The Second Time

By Arthur Mills

Beginning an Adventure Series laid on a ranch in Argentina

The Getaway Horse

By Sam Carson

Another fascina ing snap-shot of racetrack men—and a woman

Mad Money

By Elizabeth Newport Hepburn

In which red hair proves to be not always an indication of temperament

Apartment 4 D

By Elsa Barker

An intimate page of New York life that the police records failed to cover

Or Not At All

By Robert Simpson

The story of a man who always played safe

Passion Fruit

By H. De Vere Stacpoole

In the abandon of the South Seas Carstairs loves, and forgets,
but the girl—Never!

Mademoiselle Meddlesome

By Karl W. Detzer

Adrian, bewildered by the whims of stage-craft, finds that art
and success are not always incompatible

And "The Devonshers," by Honoré Willsie Morrow; "The Citadel," by Joseph Husband, and "The Finger of Fire," by George Kibbe Turner

August EVERYBODY'S—Out July 15



Everybody's Chimney Corner

*Where Reader, Author and Editor
Gather to Talk Things Over*

"STORIES come from me sweatingly, after the manner of something undergoing distillation, drop by drop," writes Stanley Olmsted ("Tosca of the Tenements," page 27) in reply to *Chimney Corner's* request for something about himself and how he goes about his work.

When I try to dip them up by the gallon [he goes on] it's always sea-water and a little brackish at that. Yet one dreams of some day forsaking the carafe for salt ocean swimming in a novel longer than the "Jean Christophe" of Romain Rolland.

In the senior year of high-school days I wrote an operetta "The Astrologer"—dialogue, lyrics and music. Triumphant it was given before 1500 Parents, Aunts, Cousins, and the Parents and Aunts and Cousins of those, and Mr. Victor Herbert, then in his effulgence, was warned to look to his laurels. After that the oozing was at the ivory keyboard, and was of blood in a Europe not yet gone bloody. Pass over the years of expounding that keyboard in Young Ladies' Seminaries and in Conservatories where predominantly Young Ladies were enrolled. They too were gory and must go.

THERE were various public appearances too, and of terrors indescribable. These included presentation as soloist with a Symphony Orchestra in the home Washington, D. C., under direction of the late Mr. Reginald De Koven, who would never have done it had he known I had long ago composed a lot of his tunes. The Grieg Concerto, of course. How I must have chastened its Nordic bacchanalia with nervic chills! There was another and a happier occasion: a piano recital, unassisted, two hours long, in Sibley Dome at Cornell University. They hired me for one of the concerts of a "Chamber Series" of five, the other four being by allegedly world-renowned artists. That was one of the rare times in my life when I found it pleasant to be judged by the company I was keeping. Already I felt myself the writer. The piano had gone casual only to grow kind. For by that time a first little novel, "The Nonchalante," had been accepted, published by Henry Holt and Co., and listed in *Life* in a summary of the first twelve works of fiction of its

year. (Don't imagine that made the public buy it!) Among the other eleven names I recall Mark Twain's, Booth Tarkington's, Edith Wharton's, Maurice Hewlett's, Henry James's—but turn the mildewed files of your "life" from that Springtide vintage of 1906 and see for yourself. Again the company was better than that supplied by a lifelong Kneiping habit attained in Germany and Austria. Attained after much struggle, be it added. For I had been ushered up to Washington by migratory parents, a more or less barefoot and brushwood boy from the mountains of extremest western North Carolina where the Kneiper ne'er but moonshines and the farmer often rests.

MUSICAL specialists have always advised me I should do nothing but write; publishing, editorial and writing specialists have ever reprimanded me for the crime of doing aught but trying to play (the piano). One so pendulous can but keep doing both, capable of nothing but, if of nothing better.

Yet there is a strange thing about it all. Sweating out a story with anything like approximate half-satisfaction to oneself, seems to sweat out ivory keyboard technique too: as if the brain cells grew radio-active, to send clean messages of manipulation from shoe-sole to shoulder-blade. Could ever I write a truly masterly story I would hasten to the old Knabe grand, knowing virtuosity awaited me there.

Ah, well—at least one must woo the thing he may not win. . . .

PHOEBE O'NEALL FARIS ("God-Horses," page 73) was a teacher in a western town before she became a writer. But let her tell the story:

Four years ago I put pedagogy and the West behind me, and set sail for the West Indies and the parts of the Spanish Main following in the wake of a botanist—my husband. And let me tell here that I do not think there is a surer way of getting into things in tropical lands than by following a plant man about.

I soon found myself actually on the search



Phoebe O'Neill Faris introduces us to a little-known part of America.



Roderick W. Siler, formerly of the world but now of America, presents an American story.



Oscar Lewis polishes up a few of the brighter parts of America's recent sojourn in France.

for the curious and unusual—the peculiar character such as God-Horse Jones, the unknown bit of legend or folk-lore, the situation that was out of the ordinary, and the beautiful hidden spots where other people did not go. When I came north to New York a year and a half ago it occurred to me that I might write about some of those curious people I had known in the islands; then I thought of the words of an Englishman who said that Americans read only stories about Americans and wondered whether I could “get by” with them—because to me, an incurable romanticist, the interesting people one finds in the tropics are not the “Americans.”

“THE STRANGE DAWG,” by Roderick W. Siler (page 171), is an unusual type of story, one from which the reader would guess that the author had had an interesting career; and he has. He writes:

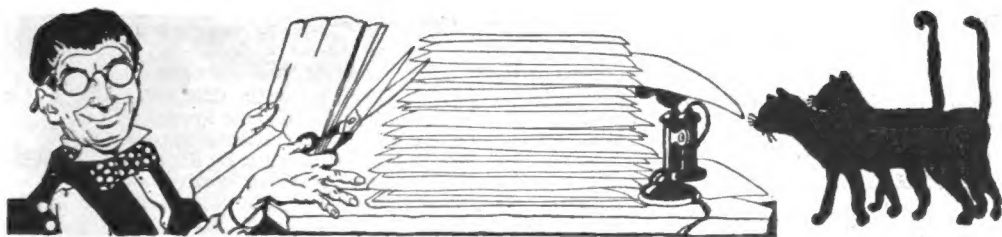
Born on island off the coast of Africa, though of American and English parentage. Color, white. Gave great promise as a child, being exceptionally stupid. Father's interests took me while young to Africa, South America, West Indies, Europe, though, being unimpressible, few memories remain to me of any possible value to a possible fictionist. Graduated in this country in civil engineering, a noble and manly profession, no less notable because of the opportunities it offers for hard work and small pay.

I wandered from east coast to west coast of the United States, to Canada, to Central America, West Indies and Europe, seeking work or to escape it, and vainly trying to find an heiress who wanted to marry an engineer, according to a tale frequently published in the magazines. In 1916 I tackled a real job, in the hope of escaping the twin evils, overwork and underpay. Escaped the latter and got no pay at all. I attempted to edit and produce a small magazine, with the thought of removing the literary center from New York to the middle West. I found it required more than the production of literature to do this. Came to the Twin Cities (St. Paul-Minneapolis) in 1918 on Government work, and have remained here.

Still single, poor, ambitious, honest.

OSCAR LEWIS (“The Battle of Couets,” page 128) describes himself thus:

Born at San Francisco; age 31; complexion, a qualified brunette. Am a person of violent prejudices, which, however, change so often that I have trouble keeping up with them. So far as I know I have a permanent opinion on only one subject: that Conrad's “Youth” is the most glorious piece of prose ever written. My two current ambitions are to live in a villa in the Fiesole hills and to ride a camel from Touggourt across the Sahara to Timbuktu; pending their realization, I live in a bungalow in Berkeley, California, and ride on the street-cars. That's the trouble with my biographical notes: The things I contemplate are always so much more thrilling than those I actually do that I can never work up much enthusiasm for the latter.



Prose and Worse, by Gridley Adams

DO YOU BELIEVE IN SIGNS?

On Park Avenue, New York City: "M. Glassman, Glazier." (R. L. B.)
 On Bellingham, Wash., theater: "This Entrance for Exit Only."
 (MISS R. B.)
 At 70th & Clyde streets, Chicago: "St. Imps." (MISS F. R.)
 Hotel Du Pont, Wilmington, Del.: "Mansure & Prettyman, Men's
 Furnishings." (MISS A. R. L.)
 In Fresno County, Calif.: "A Sinner, Grape Raiser." (R. L. B.)
 In Norfolk, Va., barber shop: "Look at the Back of your Neck."
 (MISS A. C. M.)
 In San Francisco: "Pife Building, No. 1, Drum Street." (MISS M. O.)
 Call letters, Detroit Police radio station: "K O P."
 On Market St., Wilmington: "Max Needle, Tailor." (MISS A. L. R.)
 In Haverhill, Mass.: "Lay & Hatch."

(North Judson, Ind., News)

The greatest surprise to a girl who gets kissed the first time is there is no taste to it.

"No taste to it? Well, by the hen's feathers on Cupid's dart that news-man must be color blind in the palate. They tell us, those who have tried it, that it tastes like the double distilled essence of honey spread thick on a piece of pumpkin pie. Away back in the dim joyful years ago before we lost our teeth and our cinch on the beauty prize, the prettiest girl in all the world told us with her eyes that it felt like a covey of quail flying out of each ear and ended with a sensation like a flock of angels pouring molasses down one's back. No taste to the first kiss? Great Scott. It would make a wooden cigar-store Indian's hair curl." (Newton County Democrat.)

Boy, telephone my wife that I'll be home for lunch today.

(Glasgow Herald)

Ladies' wardrobe (deceased) for sale. 5808 Herald Office. (A. M. S., GLASGOW.)

Mine's pretty near on its last legs, too.

(Aberdeen, Wash., World)

The many girls which have made their home on the Harbor during the winter season have suddenly disappeared. Most of them have gone to the beach and will stay there during the nesting season.

(MRS. M. F. W.)

Now that the ice has left the lakes,
 And leaves form on the limbs,
 'Tis time to shake the girl who skates
 And take the girl who swims.

Everybody's Magazine, July, 1924

(Madison, Wis., Daily Cardinal)

KENOSHA—While waiting for a steak in a restaurant here, John Kusins, 35 years old, dropped dead.

Dear me! Why, that chap was actually impatient!

(Brockton, Mass., Enterprise)

WANTED—Men on dying machines. Logan & Co., 66 East Railroad Ave.

Chauffeurs?

(Received by a film exchange)

Dear Sir: I received your letter naming some of the films you have. I would like for you to send me the Life of Christ if you have it. If you haven't got the Life of Christ, please send me six reels Chas. Chaplin, two reels Hot Gibson. Yours respectfully,

(Booker, Texas)

Mrs. Lot Keffer was very sick this last week, but at this writing she's a lot better.

That writing would give me the pip.

(Rhinebeck Gazette)

\$75,000 Fire At Germantown

One of the heaviest fogs of the year so hampered the going that it was nearly eleven o'clock before any out-of-town assistance arrived and that was Company No. 5 of Hudson who came without any apparatus.

As firemen they would make good plumbers.

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(Chicago Evening Post)

Mrs. Perkins Bass has returned from Fish Creek,
Wis. (C. W. F.)

One that got away.

(Martinsville, Ind.)

"We shave you without pain, or whiskers
refunded." (MISS M. E. D.)

Yes, but, whose might I get?

*(Sign in County Register's Office, New City,
Rockland Co., N. Y.)*

HANDLE THESE BOOKS AS YOU
WOULD YOUR SWEETHEART

(C. H. B.)

Treat 'em rough—they like it!

(Grand Rapids Herald)

BEHEADED MAN MAY BE HOSPITAL
ORDERLY. (MISS T. E. T.)

What! Brains not necessary?

(Cincinnati Enquirer)

EXPERIENCED colored girl wants two day's
cleaning. Phone W. 2482L. (E. J. R.)

Probably in Tuesday's paper.

(Dalton news in Springfield, Mass., Republican)

At the Congregational church, this morning, five
chickens were presented for baptism.

Colored church?

(New York Tribune)

Davies-Vanderbilt Wedding.

The bridesmaids were dressed alike in orchid-
colored hats trimmed with lace and carried bouquets
of orchids and lilies-of-the-valley.

Well, orchids, if the stems are long enough,
will cover a multitude of shins.

(Married in Pittsburgh)

Shoot-Behr.

(C. E. W.)

"Out where the West begins."

(Montgomery, Ala.)

Lamb-Slaughter Wedding Celebrated at Five
Points. (MISS S. D. F.)

He orter known 'twas leap-year.

(Sheridan, Mo., Press)

Mr. and Mrs. W. W. Aldrich were up to see Silas
Round of near Conway, and Mr. Round is still in
a very serious condition. (MISS D. A. D.)

I told those folks to keep away.

(Some recent court cases)

Love v. Kozy Theater Co. (236 S. W. 243).

Good v. Story (215 Pacific Reporter, 614).

Love v. Fetters (121 Atlantic Reporter, 607).

People v. Grafft (214 Pacific Reporter, 273). Will
that chap never get off our necks?

O-So-White, Inc., v. Sky Blue Wet Wash Laun-
dry, Inc. (City Court of N. Y.)

Joy v. Joy (Phila. Co., 183). One Joy was repre-
sented by Attorney Alexander Love, Jr. (A joy ride
ended by love.)

From v. From (Cincinnati Court Index). Equally
willing, evidently.

Spooner v. Spooner, Plate v. Plate (Alameda
County). The trouble in both cases started in the
kitchen.

(St. Louis Post-Dispatch)

Monkey cages will line the first-floor walls and a
cage 16 x 35 feet for educated monkeys will be in the
center. Offices for the Zoo Board will be on the
second floor. (M. C.)

Now let's go upstairs; 's something awful
funny up there.

(Kansas City Star)

EVENING of October 20; a large car on wrong
side of street in Mount Washington struck Rose
Price, carrying off her cape and breaking left head-
light; injuries serious. (J. V. D.)

And the pane muster been awful!

(Ad in Chicago Sunday Tribune)

Innumerable boils on each of the three children of
Mrs. Mary H. Lloyd of New Albany, Ind. All
treatment seemed in vain. Three medicine spoons
went down three tiny throats twenty times daily.

(MRS. E. D. A.)

Where every little tummy has a silver lining
all its own.

(Omaha Daily News)

The newest thing in men's wearing apparel has
arrived in Omaha, the sport cape! Perry Allen, who
is the recognized authority for men's fashions, has
made his appearance wearing the short sport cape,
and it is predicted that before long all the younger
bachelors will all be wearing them.

Mr. Allen, the other evening, called to take a
most popular young maid out to spend the evening
in the knickers and cape. (MRS. A. S.)

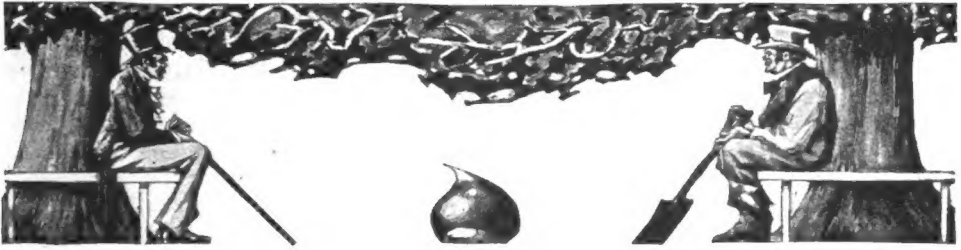
Migawd, Mildred, you'll catch your death o'
cold!

(Santa Rosa Press-Democrat)

Mrs. Wallace Thomas is enjoying a visit from her
parents, Mr. and Mrs. R. Simons of San Francisco.

Helen Fountain, too, has been entertaining the
unwelcome guest, while still others are expecting to
do so in the near future. (MISS C. B. F.)

Ain't it awful, Mabel?



Everybody's Chestnut Tree

EDITOR'S NOTE: Though the sign is the Chestnut Tree, no story is barred by its youth. We will gladly pay for available ones. Address all manuscripts to "The Chestnut Tree," enclosing stamped addressed envelope.

A FORMER Speaker of the House once wired a fellow politician to meet him in Pittsburgh, and the recipient, wishing to avoid what he feared might be an unpleasant interview, took advantage of interrupted communication, due to heavy rains, and replied:

"Sorry I cannot get to Pittsburgh. Washout on line."

The Speaker wired back: "Don't mind a little thing like that. Buy a new shirt and come on."

The politician kept the appointment.

"DID you give the man the third degree?" asked the police officer.

"Yes. We browbeat and badgered him with every question we could think of."

"What did he do?"

"He dozed off and merely said now and then, 'Yes, my dear, you are perfectly right.'"

"WHY can't we have a business man for mayor?" stormed the busy executive to his assistant. "Why can't we—"

"Humph!" ejaculated the assistant. "No business man would pay the necessary cash for so little value received."

NEW BOARDER: Who was that man I saw drive in a few minutes ago?

MRS. HENRY MUDGE: Do you mean that little, ornery-lookin' cuss with the dirty red whiskers, ma'am?

NEW BOARDER: Yes.

MRS. HENRY MUDGE: I reckon you must be referrin' to my husband.

"WELL, Pat, do the twins make much noise nights?"

"Praise be to Hivin! Sure, each wan cries so loud yez can't hear the ither wan."

DURING his first charge a clergyman found the women of the church entirely too much interested. Such a storm of petty squabbles arose from their overeagerness to help that in despair he gave up. Not long afterward he met his successor.

"How are you getting along with the women?" asked the escaped minister.

"Very well," was the answer. "There's safety in numbers."

"I found it in Exodus," was the rejoinder.

HE HAD just comfortably settled himself in the parlor with his arm around his sweetheart when her little brother came into the room and sat down.

"Here's a dime," said he to the boy. "Get yourself some candy."

"Don't want any candy," retorted the brother.

"Then here's a quarter; chase yourself."

"Don't want a quarter, either."

"Well, then, here's a dollar: go to a show."

"Don't want to go to the show."

"Well, for cat's sake, what do you want?"

"I want to watch."

OFFICER (to recruit): Goodness gracious! Man, where are all your shots going? Every one has missed the target.

SOLDIER (nervously): I don't know, sir. They left here all right.

A GENTLEMAN from down near Twin Mountains, Texas, boarded a rickety railway coach and settled himself for an hour's journey. As the train finally approached his destination he rose; but to his amazement they rattled past without stopping. The traveler's Texas blood was up and he yelled:

"Hey theah, you Mistah Conductah! That was mah station. Why didn't you-all stop this heah train and lemme off?"

The conductor removed his pipe, then answered very deliberately:

"Why, I'll tell ya how it is, boss. Mah engineah's mad at that theah station agent, so we don't stop theah no moah."

SHE wrote to a poultry journal that poultry raising was much to her liking, and wondered how long the hen should remain on the eggs. The editor wrote:

"Three weeks for chickens and four weeks for ducks."

Later she wrote to the poultry journal as follows:

"Many thanks for your advice about the setting hen. She remained on the nest three weeks, and at the end of that time there were no chickens hatched. As I did not care for ducks, I took her off the nest and sold the eggs."

"**SELF-CONTROL**," said a fond parent, "is listening to the other fellow brag about his kiddies and how bright they are, without stopping him to tell a few about your own."

A VIOLINIST entered a London music-seller's shop.

"I want an E string, please," he remarked to the assistant behind the counter.

Producing a box, the latter said:

"Would you mind pickin' one aht for yourself, sir? I 'ardly knows the 'es from the shes!"

FIRST SCIENTIST (viewing monkey in cage): It is apparent to me—

SECOND SCIENTIST: Ah! Really I did not know you claimed so close a relationship.

"**YOU'RE** lookin' bad, Wullie."

"Aye, I've been in the hospital an' the doctors have tooken awa' ma appendix."

"These doctors'll tak' onything. It's a peety ye didna have it in yer wife's name."

"**I NEVER** for the life of me," observed Mrs. Callahan to Mrs. Casey, "could understand about this wireless telegraph thing."

"Why," said Mrs. Casey, "it's as plain as day. They just send the messages through the air instead of over wires."

"Sure, I know that," continued Mrs. Callahan; "but how do they fasten the air to the poles?"

PASSENGER (after the first night on board ship): I say! Where have my clothes gone?

STEWARD: Where did you put them?

PASSENGER: In that little cupboard there, with the glass door to it.

STEWARD: Bless me, sir! That ain't no cupboard. That's a porthole!

A COLORED man entered the general store of a small town and complained to the storekeeper that a ham that he had purchased a few days before had proved not to be good.

"The ham is all right, Sam," insisted the storekeeper.

"No, it ain't, boss," insisted the other. "Dat ham's sure bad."

"How can that be," continued the storekeeper, "when it was cured only last week?"

Sam reflected solemnly a moment and then suggested:

"Maybe it's done had a relapse."

MRS. BROWN (to new maid): Well, Nora, I hope we shall get along very nicely; I'm not at all difficult to please.

NORA: No, mum, that's just what I thought the very minute I set eyes on the master.

MY MOTHER took my little brother over to see our neighbors' new baby. He looked at the baby for a few minutes but had nothing to say. Returning home a little later, Freddy asked:

"Does the doctor bring all the babies, mamma?"

"Why, of course!" she told him.

"Well, I'm going to be a doctor when I grow big," he earnestly said.

"And why do you want to be a doctor, son?" mother asked him.

"Because when I get married I can pick out the prettiest babies and keep them for ourselves."